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THORS' SERIES

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THE

Mystery of Raven Rock

A NOVEL

BY

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"The Deserted Wife," "The Haunted Homestead," "Unknown,"
"The Bride's Fate," "The Lost Heiress,"
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THE MYSTERY OF RAVEN ROCKS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVE OF PARTING.

It was early on a clear, cold, still, starlight night, in the first week of November. It was the evening before the departure of Musa and her guests from Bay Beauty, and nearly all the preparations had been completed for the flitting.

Mrs. Shrewsbury and Captain Philip, her son, had taken leave of Clarice and her friends at The Shoals that morning. And they were now shut up alone together in the old lady's private sitting-room, talking over the arrangements for the approaching marriage of that gallant cavalry officer and the sprightly little heiress of Pirate's Peak, Espirita Carew.

Kate Carew was in her bedchamber, engaged in some final little preparation for her journey.

Armida Sutton, in her own apartment, was similarly occupied.

There was a bright, cheerful wood fire burning in the open fireplace, in the old-fashioned, oak-paneled parlor.

But there were only two occupants of the room—August Carew and Musa Percie.

They were seated far apart, at opposite sides of a large round table that stood in the middle of the room before the fire.

Both were reading, or trying to read, and both were silent and fearfully self-conscious of being under a spell.

August was the first to lay down his book and speak.

He looked at Musa in silence for a few minutes.

And she felt that he was looking at her, though she never raised her eyes.

"Miss Percie," he began, in a low voice, "this is our last evening on this beautiful coast. The night is very fine, for November, and the sea is grand under the starlight. Will you put on your shawl, and give me your company for a walk on the beach?"

"I shall be very much pleased to do so," answered Musa, as she arose to leave the room to get her wraps.

While she was gone, August Carew left his seat by the fire and began to walk up and down the floor.

In about five minutes, however, she rejoined him.

They went out together, and took the Almond Tree avenue down to Cape Welcome.

The tender exotic trees that bordered this avenue, and gave it their name, were now quite stripped of their leaves; and the clear blue-black night sky, with its millions of brilliant stars could be seen through their naked twigs and branches.

The pair walked down the avenue in almost perfect silence.

And not until they came out upon the open beach and saw the clear dark bay, with its glittering ripples, almost rivaling the clear, dark sky, with its sparkling stars, stretched out before them, was a single sentence spoken.

Then August Carew broke the silence, as he had broken it a few minutes before, in the drawing-room.

"This is our last evening at Bay Beauty, Miss Percie," he said, in a very sad tone.

"And I am very sorry," murmured Musa.

"To-morrow morning we part and go on our several ways and in opposite directions. You and the ladies of your party to Washington, and my mother and myself to Richmond," he added, gravely.

"I am very sorry," repeated Musa, in a low voice.

The answer was a monotonous and a conventional one, but not the less sincere on that account.

"And now before we part, Miss Percie, I must thank you for the happiest season I have ever passed in all my life," he added, in an earnest manner.

"You are very good to say so. And certainly I may return your words. We have to thank you, Mr. Carew, for much enjoyment this summer and autumn. Your presence here has added very much to our pleasures,"

answered Musa, compelling herself to speak with conventional formality and politeness, although her heart was beating fast and her voice was trembling.

Perceiving her emotion, and drawing a favorable augury from it, he spoke again and more earnestly:

"Musa, will you make me happy for all our future lives? I love you. I dare to hope and believe you love me. Will you be my wife?"

The words were spoken. But oh! so calmly, though so earnestly. And he was looking in her face, pouring the light and love of his soul into her eyes while he waited her answer.

But her heart was throbbing so violently, that she could not speak for some moments.

He waited patiently, walking slowly by her side, and holding with his right hand her hand that lay upon his left arm, for a few moments, and then he asked:

"How shall I interpret your silence, dearest Musa?"

"Yes," she murmured very slowly and softly; "yes, I will be your wife, for I love you, August."

Forgotten for the moment was her solemn oath to Bertie! Forgotten even the terrible secrets of her life! Forgotten was her very child, as she gave this promise!

He drew her to his bosom, and sealed their betrothal on her lips, murmuring:

"And I promise to devote my whole life to the welfare and happiness of my beloved wife. It was to ask you this question, dearest Musa, that I brought you out here, under the stars," he added, as they walked on.

They walked and talked for more than an hour longer, but their further conversation would be interesting to no one except themselves.

At length they turned to go home.

As soon as they re-entered the house, Musa hurried up to her own room, where she locked the door and threw herself upon her bed, suffering all the horrors of the reaction and the realization of her position.

"What have I done? Oh, great Heaven! what have I done?" she muttered, with a shudder, as she buried her face on the pillow, and thought of her sacred promise to Bertie, who had given her the honest love of his young heart, and thought of her little, meek-eyed child, left

among strangers, unacknowledged, and now never to be acknowledged.

For she could not force herself to tell the unhappy secret of her private marriage and maternity to the devoted lover who was about to become her second husband.

Yes, he was certainly to be her second husband. For her mad love for him was the strongest passion of her life, and she was fully resolved to be his wife, in defiance of any ruin or misery that might afterward ensue from the marriage.

She had come to this—to marry August Carew, whatever might be the consequence to herself or to others.

There was no indecision in her mind now. Her resolution was unchangeable as fate.

She would marry him because all other evils in life, and death itself, seemed light in comparison to the anguish and despair she would suffer in leaving or losing him.

There was some satisfaction in having come to this fixed determination.

But in the meantime she was stung and tortured by pity and remorse, and haunted by the image of the faithful friend she was about to betray, and of the meek-eyed, lovely child she was about to discard.

But in all this she did not suffer as much as she felt she should suffer in the loss of him she loved unto death.

She tried to compromise with her conscience in this manner. She resolved first to write to Bertie, and request him to release her from her rash vow. It would be a mere form, she knew, for however it might pain the young duke to comply with her request, honor, generosity and manliness would compel him to do it.

But her child—her little, meek, loving baby! Oh, with what anguish she thought of her! Once it occurred to Musa that she could take the little, lovely, dark-eyed darling, and lay her in her lover's arms, and tell him the story of her life, and trust his noble heart to receive her with sympathy and affection.

Ah, if she had only followed that inspiration of her good angel, and trusted the great soul who had given her his whole love and faith, and who trusted her entirely.

But no. She shrunk from telling him, lest, in his

high, pure sense of truth and honor, he should judge her too sternly; lest he should despise her for the deception she had felt forced to practice in the world; lest he should discard her and never see her more.

The thought was death!

She could not lose him. She could not even risk the slightest chance of losing him. She must have him, be the consequences what they might. She must have him, or die.

But, oh! her little child! Well, she resolved that she would not desert that child. Although she could not acknowledge her, yet she would not desert her. She would go to New York before her marriage and make ample provision for little Musette, and leave her with the good women who were now taking care of her.

And she hoped that, perhaps, after her marriage with August Carew, after she should have proved her devoted love to him as only a wife could prove it, after she should have secured and riveted his attachment to herself, beyond the possibility of his breaking it, then she might contrive some means of bringing the child under her own roof. She might adopt it as an orphan, or she might possibly bring herself to confess her former marriage, and acknowledge the child as her own.

Come! she thought, her position was not so desperate, after all. She would write to Bertie, and obtain, on demand, a release from her promise to him. She would provide for her child. And she would marry August Carew! Whatever might happen, she would marry August Carew.

Having devised this thoroughfare through her difficulties, and, having persuaded herself that it would be a safe one, Musa arose and rearranged her dress, and went downstairs, where she found August and Mrs. Carew *tête-à-tête* in the oak-paneled parlor.

As soon as Musa appeared at the door, August arose and met her. He drew her arm within his own, and led her up to the elder lady, and said:

"My dear mother, Miss Percie is to be my wife."

"The mischief she is!" was the reception Kate Carew gave to this anouncement. "Well, I suppose, it is fate. So have it your own way, Musa, though you might have

done better. You might have been the Duchess of Montcalla. But have your own way. It is fate."

"A very happy fate! Will you not congratulate us?" inquired August, with a smile.

"Here is Mrs. Shrewsbury; it is more in her line than in mine. She will do it for me," laughed Mrs. Carew, as the old lady entered the room.

"No, Kate, I entreat you. Stay! Say nothing to her, or to any one else, for the present," implored Musa, in a low voice.

"All right; I am mum," answered Mrs. Carew, laughing.

Madam Chief Justice sailed up to the fireplace, but did not take the seat that Mr. Carew promptly placed for her.

She had come to break up the circle, she said, that every one might go to bed, and get a good night's rest, so that they might be up early in the morning, in time to breakfast comfortably and get ready for the boats.

"Your boat, Kate, for Richmond, usually gets here between seven and eight in the morning, and ours for Washington about ten. So you must be up early, at any rate, if you want to catch it. And as we would like to see you off, why, it follows, as a matter of course, that we must be up equally early," added the old lady.

The company assented to the prudence of her advice, and in a few moments bade her and each other good-night and retired to rest.

Early in the next morning the whole party reassembled for the last time at the breakfast-table of Bay Beauty. And, after a comfortable meal, they all walked down to the pier to wait the boat.

"I am to come to you at Christmas to claim your hand, dearest Musa, remember," whispered August Carew.

"Yes, you have my pledge," she answered, in the same low key.

"But it will be hard to stay away from you so long. May I not come to see you in the meantime, once or twice?" he inquired.

"Come as often and stay as long as you please," an-

swered Musa, who loved her betrothed too devotedly to use any *finesse* on this occasion.

"Heaven bless you for your kind, frank words! Good-by, my best beloved," he whispered, pressing her hand before he stepped forward to hand Mrs. Kate Carew across the gangplank into the steamer.

In another moment he was on the deck of the steamer, which was just putting off from the pier.

In a few minutes the Washington steamer came puffing up to the pier. They were all soon on board, the boat steaming rapidly before wind and tide for the entrance of the Potomac River.

After a cold but rather pleasant voyage of two days, the steamer reached the wharf at the foot of Sixth street, Washington City.

Musa's carriage, horses and servants awaited her party on the landing.

Leaving all their baggage in the charge of a footman, to be forwarded to the house, the party entered the large carriage, and were driven at once home to Vermont avenue.

After tea, Musa, leaving the ladies of her houshold to their own devices, and leaving her servants to attend to the unpacking and arranging of her wardrobe, went and locked herself up in the library to write to Bertie.

She found the task the most difficult one that she had ever undertaken to do. It occupied her the whole afternoon. She wrote and tore up many letters before she got one to suit her.

In writing to the young duke, she threw herself upon his generosity.

She told him that she had never loved him but as a very dear brother; she reminded him that she had never even professed to do so.

She prayed him to remember that she had never given him any reason to believe she could ever marry him, though she had rashly promised never to marry any one else.

She entreated now to be released from that promise; because when she made it, she did not know her own heart. And she added that he had known her heart better than she had, when he prophesied that she would

love again. This prophecy, she told him, had been fulfilled. She could not help it. It was her fate.

Ending as she had begun, she threw herself on his generosity.

When she had signed, sealed, and directed this letter she felt that she had done a very cruel and selfish thing. She was piereced to the heart by compassion and remorse. Yet not for that would she pause in her course. She must break with Bertie, and she must marry August Carew, let the consequences be what they might.

On Saturday, at the breakfast-table, she announced to the ladies of her household that she should go to New York on Monday for a few days. Her sudden and erratic movements had ceased to surprise her friends. So they made no comment beyond expressing a wish that she might have a pleasant journey.

On Monday morning, Musa, attended by her faithful old servant Cassy, took the early train to New York, where she arrived late in the afternoon.

Without stopping in the city, she went straight to the Hudson River train of the hour, and ran up to Inwood, where she arrived just as the sun was sinking behind the Palisades on the west bank of the river.

She had not notified the inmates of the cottage of her intended arrival. She wished to take them by surprise, and see how she should find her child, when they did not expect her.

Intending to go right in upon the family, when they got up to the top of the wooded bank, on which the cottage stood, they went around the garden wall, and entered by the back gate.

As they walked up a path covered by a grapevine arbor to the back door, they saw the back windows suddenly illumined, as if the lamps had just that moment been lighted. But the shutters were not yet closed.

"Hush, Cassy! Tread softly. I wish to look in at the windows and see what my baby is doing, if she is there," whispered Musa, as she crept up to the wall.

She stood on one side and peeped through the lighted window, and this was what she saw in the back parlor:

Near the window, on a low stool, with his back to her, sat Sam Seaforth, and before him stood her dark-eyed

baby, whose tiny hands Sam was holding, while he talked to her and tried to teach her to stand alone.

"All alony—lony! All alony now for Sam!" he said, as he let go her little fingers gradually.

She stood alone for an instant, and then, with a deprecating little laugh, she fell forward, with her hands grabbing his knees.

He was trying the experiment over again, when Musa whispered to Cassy:

"The baby is all right, nurse. See how healthy she looks and how happy she is. Now let us go around to the front door and ring," she added, with a delighted smile, as she softly withdrew from the window and passed along the side of the cottage wall and around to the front door.

As she came in front, quite accidentally she saw through another lighted window into the front parlor. And this is what she saw there: Under the full blaze of a hanging chandelier, seated on a *tête-à-tête* sofa, was pretty, rosy Maggie Seaforth and—the Rev. Mr. Wilks, ex-traveling preacher and present schoolmaster. The parson was sitting so close to the widow that it was impossible to be mistaken as to the meaning of that scene.

Musa smiled as she hurried by the window and rang the bell at the front door.

The door was opened by Mary Morris, whose blooming face, at the sight of the visitor, became as pale as that of a corpse.

"Why, Mary, what is the matter? Don't you know me?" Musa inquired.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I do; I know you well enough. And I know you have come to ta—ta—take my baby away from me!" exclaimed the young foster-nurse, bursting into tears and sobbing aloud.

"Why, I have not come to do anything of the sort, you foolish girl! Come, let me in. Do you want to keep me standing out here in the cold all night?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon, ma'am, I'm sure. Do come in."

Mary Morris led the way to the door of the back parlor.

"Stop, let me go in quietly by myself first," said Musa,

as she glided past the young woman, and softly opened the door and entered.

What she saw now pleased her even more than what she had first seen through the window.

The boy Sam Seaforth held the child in his arms up before a fine life-sized, half-length oil painting of herself, Musa, and he was teaching the little creature to kiss her hand to her mother's picture and to say "mamma."

"Kiss hand to mamma. Pretty mamma!" said the boy.

And the baby smacked her little hand with her lips, and lisped, "Mam—mam——"

At that moment the boy turned around with the baby in his arms, and the child, seeing the living original of the picture standing there, stretched out her little hands, crying:

"Mam—mam!"

"She knows me. She knows me," said Musa, smiling through happy tears, as she caught the child to her bosom, and sank with her into one of the crimson arm-chairs.

"I was bound not to let her forget you, ma'am. 'Cause it was my duty not to," solemnly said the lad.

"That is right. Always try to do your duty, Sam," said Musa, gravely.

"Yes, I will; but for all that, if mammy marries the parson, I am going to run away and go to sea, I am that! I can't stand so many stepfathers."

And before Musa could rebuke him for his reckless words, some one came out of the front parlor, and there was the sound of leave-takings, and the noise of the front door clanging to, and the next moment Mrs. Seaforth came into the back parlor.

"Why, my dear Mrs. White! I hadn't the least notion that you were here. When did you come?" inquired Maggie Seaforth, in surprise, as she held out her hand to her patroness.

"I came by the evening train—the last one. I have run on to spend my baby's birthday with her. Don't you know she will be one year old on Wednesday?"

"Will she now, indeed, ma'am? I knew it was some time this month, but I had forgotten the day. La! how time flies!" mused Mrs. Seaforth.

"Look ahere, white 'oman!" cried Cassy, to the nurse. "An't yer gwine to give nobody no supper to-night? Here have me an' my mistess been travelin' all day long on de realroad cares, 'out nuffin to eat but them there nasty, chalky, windy slabs of dry dough and tar as they calls pastry. I 'clar my mistess couldn't touch 'em. No more could I. They turned my stomick, and so now we want somethin' to eat."

"Oh, indeed, yes! Mary Morris, if you will attend Mrs. White to her room, and see that she has everything comfortable there, I will go into the kitchen and get the supper, so that she can have it all ready by the time she comes down again. And Sam can mind the baby," said Mrs. Seaforth.

Musa, who was longing to get some of the railroad dust and soot off her face and hands, promptly put little Musette into the arms of her boy nurse, and followed Mary Morris upstairs.

When she went down, an excellent supper awaited her in the back parlor. And when she sat down to the table, little Musette was put in an infant's high chair and placed by her side.

Musa retired very soon after supper, and took her baby to bed with her.

And that night the bereaved young foster-mother missed the child from her own bosom so much that she cried all night about it.

"And to think that some day she will take the baby away from me altogether, and I shall never see her again. Oh! it would kill me!" was the burden of all Mary Morris' thoughts.

Musa spent nearly a month at Inwood, receiving all her letters through Mr. Locke, who forwarded them from Washington, and Mr. Haughton, at whose office in the city she regularly called for them.

During her stay, Musa made an ample provision for her child, and constituted Mr. I. V. Haughton, of No. 8 Judiciary Place, New York, guardian of its person and trustee of its property.

On the first of December she took a most sorrowful leave of her lovely child, pressing it fervently to her bosom, gazing into its dark, loving, wistful eyes, kiss-

ing it with wild ardor, and finally placing it in the arms of its nurse, and earnestly, passionately, commending it to her care.

She reached home the next morning, and, after a refreshing toilet and a nourishing breakfast, she lay down on the sofa in her sitting-room to rest herself, while she listened to the old lady's news. For Mrs. Shrewsbury had news to tell which she had wisely deferred until after breakfast.

First, then, the marriage of her son with the heiress of Pirate's Peak would have to be deferred, on account of the death of Mrs. Colonel Carew, which had just occurred, after a short, sharp attack of pneumonia.

Secondly, Musa would lose the company of her "friend" Miss Sutton, for this season, because that young lady had just been called to the sick bed of her mother, who was hopelessly ill of consumption.

Before Musa could digest all this news, Mrs. Shrewsbury drew from her pocket a parcel of letters tied together, which she handed to Musa, saying:

"And here, my love, are the letters that have accumulated for you in the last two days. Mr. Locke brought the English letter here last night, instead of sending it on by mail, as he knew you were expected home this morning."

"The English letter!" exclaimed Musa, in excitement, and all sense of fatigue vanished as she started up and held out her hand for the packet.

Casting all the other letters aside, as of little worth, she picked out the London letter and hastily tore it open.

She fully expected that this was Bertie's reply to her petition for a release from her promise to him, and that it would certainly be the release she sought.

It was indeed a letter from the young Duke of Montcalla; but it was not in the least what she anticipated that it would be. On the contrary, its contents filled her with amazement.

CHAPTER II.

BERTIE'S DECISION.

Bertie's letter to Musa was as follows:

MONTCALLA HOUSE, Kensington, November 20, 18—.

MY DEAREST MUSA:—Your letter did not in the least take me by surprise. It was but the realization of my forebodings, the fulfillment of my prophecy. Do you remember? Nor did it give the "offense" that you deprecated.

What happened is natural, is in order, was to be expected. I have no word of blame for that, or of censure for you, my dearest friend, whom I would have made my beloved wife.

(Now let that pass.)

But though your communication affected me neither with surprise nor anger, I cannot say that it did not fill my mind with anxiety on your account.

My dear, enthusiastic, impulsive Musa! Is the man upon whom you have set your heart, and for whose sake you have thrown me over, worthy of you? That is the question for me to consider.

Of course you will say "Yes," with all the earnestness of your soul—"Yes," and a thousand times "Yes."

But that does not satisfy me. I must see and know and judge for myself before I release you from your promise. If I find him worthy of you I will set you free to marry him. If I find him unworthy of you, I will hold you to the sacred vow sworn upon the Holy Word, and which you dare not break.

This letter goes by the *Suez,* which sails to-morrow morning from Liverpool.

I shall follow it by the *Darien,* which sails from Southampton three days hence. Watch, therefore, for the *Darien,* and expect to see me within twenty-four hours after her arrival.

May the Lord bless you, my dearest Musa, and may He guide us aright. Ever your faithful friend, MONTCALLA.

Musa let the letter fall from her hands, while she covered her face, and shuddered with dismay.

"Bertie coming here! Bertie resolved to see and sit in judgment on August Carew before releasing me from my vow, and allowing me to marry him!" she thought, with consternation.

"And he may be here to-morrow, to-day, this hour! The *Suez* arrived two days ago. It is quite possible the *Darien* may have come in last night or this morning. He may be here any moment. Oh! what shall I do? How

shall I meet Bertie? And, oh, good Heaven! how shall I bear to introduce him to August?" she mentally added, in great alarm.

Then she rang the bell.

"Bring me the morning papers," she said to the footman who answered the summons.

John brought the *Globe,* the *Union* and the *Intelligencer,* and laid them on the table before his mistress.

Musa took up the last-named paper, turned to the "Marine Intelligence," and read:

NEW YORK, December 3.

The steamship *Darien,* from Southampton on the 23d ultimo., arrived at this port last night.

"Bertie will be here to-night! He will be here to-night! Great Heaven! what shall I do? Yes, he will walk in upon us to-night. He said I must expect him within twenty-four hours after the arrival of the *Darien.* That is, I think he did. Let me look and be sure," said Musa to herself, as, all in a tremor, she took up his letter and read it over again to confirm her thought.

And now, in this second reading, she perceived and appreciated that which, in her utter self-absorption during the first reading, she had entirely overlooked and ignored —that was Bertie's utter self-forgetfulness, in which he refrained from all reproach, from all complaint; and thought and wrote only of her happiness, and of her welfare.

"Oh, generous, noble, and dear Bertie! How much too good you always were for me! Oh, how I hope, how I do hope, you may soon meet some young lady a thousand times prettier, better, worthier than I ever was, whom you will love a thousand times more than you ever loved me; and who will love you—even as I love August Carew!" she exclaimed, pressing his letter to her lips, while her tears fell fast upon it.

At that moment the footman entered with a card on a silver waiter, which he handed his mistress, saying:

"The gentleman is in the drawing room, miss."

"It is Bertie!" thought Musa, with a spasm of the heart, as she took up and looked at the card.

But no. The little slip of enameled pasteboard bore the name of

"Francis August Carew."

"Tell the gentleman that I will be down in a moment," said Musa, in glad surprise, as she started up and hurried to her dressing-room to adorn her beauty for him whose presence was renewed life.

She sat down before her dressing-table, rearranged her glossy black tresses in their own natural ringlets, and then changed the soft quilled silk wrapper in which she had lounged all day, for a home dress of crimson moire, trimmed with deep flounces of black guipure lace, and finished with a bertha of the same. This rich dark toilet was lighted up by jewelry of pearls and rubies.

As she gave a last look at her mirror, her eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed with delight in her own regal beauty, and in the power it gave her to win and keep the love of one who was now dearer to her than her own soul.

Sparkling and glowing with life and love, she passed downstairs and entered the drawing-room.

August Carew was standing at one of the front windows, but he turned immediately and came, with extended hands and radiant smile, to meet her.

"I received your letter notifying me that you would be here to-day, dearest, and I took the first boat that left for Washington. I drove from the landing directly here. Have I come too soon?" he inquired, when they were seated side by side on the sofa.

"Oh, no. You could not come too soon. I am so glad you came directly to us. Mrs. Shrewsbury is your aunt, you know. And it will be quite right that you should stop with us during your stay in Washington," answered Musa, frankly and warmly.

"Thanks, dearest. My only errand to the city is to see you. But for you, my love and life, I should scarcely ever come here," said August, holding and pressing her hand.

"Then, of course, that is another reason why you must 'bide' with us," said Musa, with a smile.

"And how soon shall you come to 'bide' with me forever, dearest? That is not settled yet, you know. How soon?" he earnestly inquired.

"Just as soon as may be. Oh, August, I have no will to part with you, even for a day. I have no one in the

world but you. I am so singularly alone, without parents, without brothers or sisters, without even collateral relatives. I have no one but you. And I want no one but you!" she added, passionately, forgetting, for the moment, the child, who should have been the first in the mother's heart.

"I am and I will be all to you. I swear it, dearest. But when, when will you come and be with me forever?"

Musa paused and reflected for a moment.

"See, love," he continued, "I am preparing to receive you. A month ago I put a squad of workmen into our Richmond house, to renovate it thoroughly. They will have finished it by Christmas. When, dear Musa, will you come and inhabit it?"

"We must speak with Mrs. Shrewsbury first. She is your relative, your oldest living relative, I think, and she is my chaperon. She has not yet been told of our engagement," replied Musa.

"She must be told to-day," added August.

And even as he spoke the door was swung open by the footman, and Mrs. Chief Justice Shrewsbury sailed into the room.

Mr. Carew arose to receive her.

"How do you do, August? This is really quite a pleasant surprise. When did you arrive? How did you leave Kate?" inquired Mrs. Shrewsbury, giving her hand to her nephew, and then sinking slowly into a large easy-chair.

Mr. Carew answered all her questions, and then took the hand of Musa, and led her up to the elder lady, and said:

"Aunt Shrewsbury, I know how warmly you love and esteem Miss Percie. And I know, therefore, how rejoiced you will feel to hear that she is to be more closely connected with you by marriage. Miss Percie is to be your niece."

Mrs. Chief Justice was surprised out of her usual stately propriety.

"What is all this?" she said. "Why, I thought she was engaged to the——" Then, recovering, she resumed her self-command, and said, more slowly and guardedly:

"I am very glad to hear it, my dear August. I wish

you both much happiness, with all my heart. When is the wedding to come off? Has the day been fixed?"

"The day has not been fixed. But Miss Percie has promised to do it now," answered Mr. Carew, with an appealing look to Musa.

"When will it be, Musa? You know that I should have the earliest information, my dear girl," said Mrs. Chief Justice.

"Early in the new year," said Musa, hesitatingly—"the first Tuesday in January."

"Ah, that will fall on the seventh of the month. It is a very short time," commented the old lady, with a deep sigh.

Musa read her anxious thought, and answered it.

"My dear Mrs. Shrewsbury," said she, kindly, "our marriage shall not break up this home that you have presided over with such excellent taste and tact. We shall keep it on as a winter home. For I think that we shall like to spend the season in Washington. And you, I hope, will still remain in it, in precisely the same position and under the same conditions as now."

"Thanks, Musa, my love. You have, indeed, been as a daughter to me ever since we first met," said the old lady, with more feeling than any one would have given her credit for possessing. "But what will your husband say to this arrangement?" she inquired, rather anxiously.

"I believe that I have spoken August's sentiments. Is it not so?" questioned the bride-elect, turning with a smile to her betrothed.

"Assuredly," answered Mr. Carew, with cheerful promptitude.

"And think, Mrs. Shrewsbury, how pleasant it will be for us all. We shall all gather here every winter as usual, under your wing—Clarice, Horace, Armida, August, myself and Kate."

"That will be very pleasant, my love. But are you always going to call your future mother-in-law 'Kate?'" inquired the formal old lady.

Musa broke into a silvery laugh.

"The idea of Kate being a mother-in-law! Yes, I shall always call her Kate. I am not going to make an old woman of bonny Kate by calling her anything else."

As Musa was still laughing the door was once more swung wide open, and——

"The Duke of Montcalla," was announced.

While Musa's heart was throbbing stormily, Bertie entered with a bow and a sweeping glance that seemed to include the three persons present, and then he walked straight up to Mrs. Shrewsbury, who arose to welcome him.

"Delighted to see your grace," said Mrs. Shrewsbury, as the young duke paid his respects. "So, I am sure, is Miss Percie, who is here," she added.

Bertie turned and shook hands with Musa, and tried to meet her eyes, but they were lowered to the carpet, while her flushed cheeks grew suddenly pale.

"And here is my nephew, Mr. Carew, of Raven Rocks, who has not yet had the honor of meeting your grace. Mr. Carew, the Duke of Montcalla," continued Mrs. Shrewsbury, too much engaged in doing the honors of the house to observe the pallor and agitation of Musa.

The gentlemen thus presented to each other bowed, and exchanged some words of courteous greeting.

And in another moment Bertie was seated among them.

It was well that August Carew knew nothing of the former proposal of marriage from the young duke to Musa Percie. Such knowledge might have somewhat embarrassed his intercourse with the visitor. But as the case now stood, his manner was free and courteous.

And Bertie, to all eyes but Musa's, was as courteous, free, and gay as he ever had been.

Musa saw with deep compunction that he had lost all the vivid bloom and freshness of his youth, and that the maintenance of his easy manner was an effort to him.

Mrs. Shrewsbury pressed the young duke to remain and dine with them. And Bertie frankly accepted the invitation.

Mrs. Shrewsbury withdrew from the room to interview the housekeeper and cook, in honor of the unexpected guests who were added to the family dinner party.

Bertie drew Mr. Carew into conversation on the leading topics of the day—that engaged the attention of all philanthropists both in England and America—Emancipation of the Nations, Elevation of the Masses, Education

of Poor Children, Reclamation of Criminals, Reform of Prisons, Revision of Laws, and so forth.

Musa listened, occasionally joining in the conversation.

As Bertie warmed in debate he seemed to forget his troubles, and to recover all his former youthful vivacity and earnestness. There was nothing of the "languid swell" about this hearty young English nobleman.

"He will forget me in a little time. He will throw himself into the grand work of the nineteenth century, and forget me, as I ought to be forgotten—by him," said Musa to herself as she watched him.

Dinner came on in due course.

And in the evening their circle was augmented by the arrival of Mr. Lyttleton Locke and several other gentlemen.

Bertie talked mostly to August Carew and Mrs. Shrewsbury.

He told them that he should soon leave Washington to join a party of young Englishmen, who were at present at New Orleans, *en route* for the Plains, where they intended to hunt, or, as Bertie amended his speech, to try to hunt, the buffalo. He added that he did not expect to be in London again before the meeting of Parliament, in February.

"When you will take your seat for the first time in the House of Peers," said Mrs. Shrewsbury.

"Yes, madam," gravely assented the young duke, with a bow.

Soon after this he arose to take leave.

But last of all, he bade good-by to Musa. He took her hand, and detained it in his own for a moment. He met her eyes in one thrilling gaze of devotion, of renunciation, and then bowed over her hand, dropped it, and left the room.

Musa stood with her hand fallen to her side as he had dropped it, her face bowed upon her bosom, and her eyes fixed upon the carpet in such a strange, oblivious trance-like state, in the midst of her mixed company, that August Carew came at length to her side and led her to a seat.

"The young duke is a great admirer of you, Musa," said August Carew, as he stood near the head of the sofa upon which she reclined.

"He is as noble by nature as he is by birth. He is the very best friend I have in the whole world, except yourself. And—he saved my life once, at the imminent risk of his own," sighed Musa.

"God bless him!" earnestly added August.

The next morning the little family party that gathered around the breakfast-table consisted of Mrs. Shrewsbury, Musa and August Carew. Just as breakfast was over the postman knocked, and all arose from the table and separated to read their letters.

Musa received but one, and that was sealed with the crest of the Duke of Montcalla.

She withdrew to the privacy of her own room to read it.

GADSBY'S, December 5, 18—.

MY DEAREST MUSA:—I have seen and I approve your choice. I release you of your vow to me. You are free. Before you receive this I shall be *en route* for New Orleans. I cannot trust myself to say good-by to you in person. But—God bless you.

MONTCALLA.

Musa cried a little over this letter, pressed it to her lips, then dropped it in the fire, and breathed a silent prayer for Bertie's happiness.

An hour after that, oblivious of Bertie's renunciation and sorrow, arrayed in a most becoming habit, mounted on a fine horse, and attended by her lover, she was cantering briskly along the margin of Rock Creek, enjoying her morning ride as she never had enjoyed it before.

August Carew remained for a week at Vermont avenue, and might have lingered longer had not Mrs. Shrewsbury given him a hint that the strict rules of etiquette required his absence just now.

Then, laughing at these absurd "rules of etiquette," he reluctantly took leave, to remain away until the morning of the marriage, when he should meet his bride at the church.

After the departure of August Carew the preparations for the wedding went on rapidly.

About one thousand invitations were sent out for the ceremony. And about one hundred for the breakfast.

In due time answers came to all these special letters. And all these answers were acceptances, except in one

case—that of Armida Sutton, who replied that she could not leave the sickbed of her mother even to officiate as Miss Percie's first bridesmaid.

Musa's eight bridesmaids were then selected from among the youngest and prettiest girls of her acquaintance. And they all accepted her invitation to take part in the beautiful pageant.

Musa's wedding dress and trousseau had been ordered from a New York house, and were expected to arrive a week before the wedding day.

Mrs. Shrewsbury complained that it was awkward having a wedding immediately after New Year's, as it interfered so seriously with Christmas and New Year's festivities.

Musa astonished and disgusted Mrs. Shrewsbury by starting off on the morning of Christmas Eve for a flying visit to New York. Her ostensible reason was to look after her trousseau. Her real reason was to press her child once more to her heart, to spend Christmas with her, and to load her and her protectors with Christmas presents.

On this occasion Musa went unattended, not even taking old Cassy with her.

She reached Inwood on the night of Christmas Eve. She found her little girl well and thriving as ever, but, as it seemed to the weeping mother, the child's meek, dark eyes looked more mournful than ever they had looked before. They had a loving, pleading expression in their dark depths that almost broke the mother's heart to meet.

"If I should never see you again! Ah, my tender, dove-eyed darling, if I should never see you again!" she cried, weeping over her child, as she pressed her to her bosom that night when they were alone.

She stayed with Musette two days, and then, after passionate, heart-rending embraces, she placed her in the arms of her foster-mother, commending the child to the woman's care, and set out for her return to Washington.

On arriving at Vermont avenue she found all the Carews and all the Howards there, settled in their rooms. They had arrived the day before.

After bidding them all welcome to her home, Musa retired to her own apartment.

At this hour she was no happy bride! She was half heart-broken from the parting with her child and the uncertainty of her future.

She relieved her oppressed heart by a copious fit of weeping, and then she arose and rang the bell.

Old Cassy answered the summons, and, entering the room, greeted her mistress with much affection.

"And how you fine de little gal, honey?" inquired the nurse.

"Well, Cassy, quite well, and well taken care of. But, oh, Cassy! oh, Cassy!" exclaimed the young mother, with a fresh burst of weeping.

"Now, what's de matter wid you now, honey? If de chile is well, what you cryin' 'bout?"

"Oh, Cassy! oh, Cassy! I feel as if I were deserting my poor baby! You know that after my wedding day I shall no longer be my own mistress as I am now. I cannot go and come long journeys as I do now. And, oh, if I should never see my little child again!" exclaimed Musa, abandoning herself to a paroxysm of weeping and sobbing.

Cassy made no reply, but sat down on a low stool, dropped her head in her hands and groaned at intervals, until her mistress had wept and sobbed herself into a state of comparative quietness.

Then the old nurse opened her mouth and spoke like an oracle.

"F'om what you say, Miss Musa, I take it as you an't done tell Marse Gus Carew nuffin' 'tall 'bout de chile?"

"Oh, no, no, no, Cassy! I have told Mr. Carew nothing."

"Well, den, honey, you mus' tell him eberyfing."

"Oh, no, no, no, Cassy! I could not. I never could tell him that."

"Well, den, honey, dere an't but one oder way to do. You must gib him right up. Yes, far as fings has gone, you must gib him right up."

"Oh, no, no, no, Cassy! I could not. I never could give him up. It would kill me to do so."

"My good laws o' me alibe, honey! you must do eyether one fing or else the t'other. You must eider tell him all

about it, or else gib him right up. There an't no other way, nohow."

"I cannot do either, Cassy. It is the punishment of my folly, and the curse of my life, that I cannot do either. For to do either would kill me!" exclaimed Musa, passionately, and covering her face with her hands.

"Look here, Miss Musa," said the old nurse, gravely, "I'se a rough ole 'oman, and I knows it—one ob de mos' roughest as ebber was made—but I knows what's right, and what you ought for to do, 'fore you ebber stans up before de Lord's altar along of Marse Gus, or any oder man. Now listen to me, Miss Musa. Is you a listen' to me, honey?"

"Yes, yes," answered Musa, impatiently.

"Well, den, here's where it is, honey. You an't done nuffin' wrong yet. You was lawful married to de Early young gentleman, which I myse'f has heard him call you his dear wife a hundred times or more. An' your chile was born in lawful wedlock, as you calls it. Now, honey, you jest up and tell Marse Gus Carew all about it."

"Oh, Cassy——"

"Now don't you interrupt me, honey, jest yet. Jest wait till I'm done. You jest up and tell Marse Gus all about it. How you was secretly married, and how he died, dout havin' ob a chance to 'knowledge you. And how your poor baby was a orphan before she was born. You teli Marse Gus all about it. Now do, honey. Den it will be offen your mind. Ef you don't tell him, it will always be on your mind like a millstone. You tell Marse Gus all about it. He lubs you, honey. He'll do all he can to make you happy. He'll act like de honorable gemman as he is. He'll be just. He'll 'dopt your little chile. Mind ef he don't. And lub her, too. Mind ef he don't."

"Oh! Cassy, Cassy, that would make me too happy. Such a state of things would turn this earth into a heaven for me. But no! It is impossible! I cannot tell him! He thinks that I have never been married before. I cannot run the great risk of undeceiving him. I know not what effect that would have upon him."

"Look a here, honey! I an't no witch, thanks be to goodness. I nebber selled my mortal soul to de debbel for onlawful knowledge, and signed it wid a drap o' my blood.

But for all dat, it seems to me as I can see trough and trough dat man, and I see as he has got a good, true, just, merciful heart, and one which is 'voted to you. Tell him eberyfing, honey, and he will believe you and comfort you. But don't 'ceive him, whatebber you do, honey, ef you wallys his lub. I don't fink as an hono'ble gemman like him could get ober being 'ceived. But tell him eberyfing, honey, and he will do anyfing you want him to do to make you happy," pleaded the old nurse.

"Leave me, nurse, for a little while. I must think—I must think," said Musa.

"Yes, honey, think about it. And do it, too, bless you, and you will be happy," answered the old woman, as she took herself out of the room.

Musa, left alone, walked up and down the floor in deeply-perturbed thought.

"Oh, if I could tell him this sad story! If I could feel sure that he would receive it as my old nurse says! But I cannot be sure. No one can. And I dare not tell him—I dare not risk losing him. It would kill me to lose him. Oh, Heaven, to think that I must win him only by a concealment!" she cried, sinking once more upon the bed, in an agony of self-reproach.

And so her moral sense, roused by the plain words of her honest old nurse, warred with her inclinations, making her bosom like a battlefield. And this happened not once, but many times, when she found herself alone. But at other seasons, when in company, or when engaged in active preparations for her marriage, the voice of conscience was drowned in the confusion of tongues around her.

The glad New Year was at hand. But it was understood that Mrs. Chief Justice Shrewsbury and Miss Percie would not hold their usual New Year's reception.

In fact, they could not well do so without seriously interfering with the arrangements for the grand wedding, which were now going on rapidly, and were completed on the evening of Monday, the fifth.

The drawing-room was upholstered in white and silver, the dining-room in rose and gold, and the reception-room in blue and silver. The profuse floral decorations seemed to have transformed each room and hall into a temple of Flora.

The wedding breakfast-table was set in the long dining-room. Its decorations were wonders of artistic beauty.

A curious and beautiful ornament occupied a large space on the center of the table. It was an artificial miniature lake, formed by a large plate of looking-glass laid flat on the board, and surrounded by a bank of flowers, that were reflected in the mirror as in the clear, deep waters of a lake. Upon the middle of this mirror stood the wedding-cake, in the form of a rock rising from the lake, and surmounted by a temple with classic pillars, wreathed with bright and fragrant flowers.

The wedding morning dawned—a brilliant, dazzling, winter morning. The family in the house on Vermont avenue were early astir. The bridesmaids were early on duty, but they waited together in a spare chamber, until the hour for going to church.

Clarice Howard claimed it as her especial privilege to dress the bride. And she was assisted only by Musa's faithful servants, Cassy and Servia.

Musa's dress, though it did not come from Paris, was as elegant as it was costly.

It consisted of a rich, heavy, white satin dress, made low on the neck and with short sleeves. It was trimmed with a bertha, sleeve ruffles, and deep flounces of point lace. Over this she wore a train of white Lyons velvet, lined with white silk and trimmed with swan's-down. Her ornaments were a set of superb opals, set in diamonds, the gift of the bridegroom. She did not wear orange flowers, but a wreath of rich white tea-roses crowned her beautiful black curls. And from that hung the bridal veil of fine point lace. A heavy mantle of costly ermine lay ready to be put over her shoulders and worn during the drive to and from the church. But it was to be left in the carriage at the church door.

Musa's bridesmaids wore rich white silk dresses, with fine tulle over-dresses, and wreaths of white rose-buds.

Clarice Howard wore a pale blue silk, trimmed with white thread lace, a white Paisley shawl, and a white velvet bonnet. with white and blue flowers.

Kate Carew, in half-mourning for her cousin, wore a rich black velvet dress, mantle, and bonnet.

Mrs. Shrewsbury, a brown satin dress and bonnet, and a deep sable fur cape and a muff.

Espirita Carew was in the deepest mourning for her mother; but she laid this mourning aside for one day, lest, she said, it should bring ill luck to the bride, and she wore a lavender-colored silk dress and bonnet, and a white fur cape and muff.

Six carriages were in attendance to take this company to the church, which was very much crowded; yet so perfectly still was the assemblage that every word of the impressive marriage ceremony could be heard in every part of the sacred place.

The books were opened, the exhortation was read, the momentous questions were asked and answered, the vows were made, the prayers were offered, the benediction bestowed, and all was over.

Musa Percie, for good or evil, was the wife of August Carew.

Many friends crowded around the bride to offer their congratulations; but all noticed that, in receiving them, her hand, through her glove, was icy cold, and her face was deathly white.

Mrs. Shrewsbury also noticed this, but attributed it to the chilly air of the chancel, and to the fatigue of the ceremony; and she whispered to her nephew:

"Put an end to this scene. Musa is almost overcome."

And August Carew drew his bride's arm within his own, bowed, and led her through the crowd and out of the church, and put her in his own carriage, into which he followed her. In a few minutes they drove up again before her house in Vermont avenue.

A crowd of wedding guests, in a long procession of carriages, followed the bride from the church to the house. They soon filled all the rooms. And then the brilliant bustle of the wedding breakfast ensued, which lasted about three hours. And then the bride arose and withdrew, to change her wedding dress for a traveling suit of crimson Irish poplin and sable furs.

Musa chose to receive only the adieus of her nearest

friends, and so she took leave of them in her own chamber.

Then she went out, and was met at the door by her husband, who was also dressed in a traveling suit.

He led her quietly from the house and put her in the carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive to the Richmond boat. For they were to spend their wintry honeymoon in that Southern city.

While Mr. Carew was giving minute directions to the coachman Musa was settling herself comfortably among the cushions of the carriage. In doing so she saw a letter in a white envelope stuck conspicuously under one of the straps on her right side.

Supposing it to be a business circular, she took it and opened it.

But her face was blanched to marble as she read:

False woman, cruel mother, perjured bride, do you madly hope for a single moment's happiness in your married state? Undeceive yourself; for the avenger goes before you. Nemesis will meet you at Richmond.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE STRONG AS DEATH.

Musa had scarcely time to thrust this cruel note out of sight in her pocket when August entered the carriage and took his seat by her side.

The horses immediately started.

Musa lowered her thick, brown traveling veil, that August might not see her pale and agitated face.

"Are you cold, love?" he inquired, seeing her shiver and draw her furs around her.

"Yes; the day is turning bitterly cold, I think," answered Musa, in a low, tremulous voice.

"And you are overfatigued, and not, therefore, in a condition to be exposed. There should have been a hot brick put into this carriage. Dear love, you shall never suffer from negligence again, now that you have me to take care of you," said August, as he picked up two or three loose shawls that lay upon the front seat,

and awkwardly wrapped them about her shoulders and feet.

On arriving at the boat, Musa, in all her wrappings, was hurried on board, and then into the ladies' cabin.

She took the first opportunity, when she found herself unobserved, to draw the threatening letter from her pocket, and put it into the fire that was burning in the stove. And she watched the paper shrivel up and consume to ashes before she shut the stove door.

Then, with an effort, she controlled all outward expression of the intense anxiety she suffered, and she even forced herself to converse with her husband with seeming ease and cheerfulness.

They had a very cold voyage down the Potomac, and down the Chesapeake, and up James River to Richmond, where they arrived on the evening of the second day.

Mr. Carew's carriage was standing at the wharf; August handed Musa into it, and gave the order:

"Home."

When the carriage drew up in front of the Carew mansion the doors were thrown open, and a troop of well-trained servants, headed by the housekeeper, waited in the hall to receive the young master and mistress. August led Musa into the house, whispering words of fondest welcome to her.

"Mrs. Watson will see you to your room, my dear," he said, indicating the housekeeper, who now came forward.

Mrs. Watson was a respectable, middle-aged white woman, who at once offered her services to Musa, and took her upstairs to a spacious and beautiful chamber, furnished in rose-color and white.

"How lovely this is!" said Musa, looking around with what, under happier auspices, would have been delight, but which was now only sorrowful approval and tender gratitude.

"Yes, ma'am, it is indeed perfectly lovely," assented Mrs. Watson. "And Mr. Carew had all this made to order under his own direction. And he selected all the little things, even to the mantel and toilet ornaments."

Musa shivered.

"You are cold, ma'am. The weather has been bitterly cold for the last two days. Come to the fire," said the housekeeper, pushing a comfortable armchair up to the fireplace, where a bright coal fire was burning in the polished steel grate.

Musa sank into the offered seat, and stretched her hands out toward the fire; but, ah, the chill that seized her then could not be dispelled by heat!

Nemesis—Nemesis was to meet her at Richmond! How? When? In what form?

These were the thoughts that seemed to turn her blood to ice.

Who was her unknown enemy? How had that enemy got possession of her secret, and thereby got control of her fate?

She could not conjecture, unless it had been by means of her lost letter.

While she sat shivering over these thoughts, the housekeeper, forgotten, stood waiting. At length Mrs. Watson ventured to ask:

"Can I be of any further use to you, ma'am?"

"No, thank you. I want nothing. You can go, if your duties require your presence elsewhere," Musa gently replied.

But, before the housekeeper could withdraw, steps were heard outside, followed by a rap at the chamber door.

"It is my baggage. Will you open the door, Mrs. Watson?" inquired Musa.

The housekeeper immediately obeyed, and old Cassy entered, followed by two of the menservants, bearing between them a large Saratoga trunk, which they set down under the direction of their conductress, and then retired, followed by Mrs. Watson.

Musa said to Cassy:

"Will you open the trunk and lay out my maize-colored moire antique?"

"Oh, yes, honey," said the old woman, drawing the bunch of keys from her pocket, and proceeding to business.

Musa never spent much time over her toilet. And so, in a few minutes, she changed her traveling dress of crimson Irish poplin for an evening dress of maize-

colored moire antique, trimmed with white point applique flounces, and with bertha and sleeve-falls of the same lace.

She wore the set of opal jewelry that had been the bridal present of August. And she took a pale tea rose from the vase of flowers on her dressing-table, and placed it in her hair.

She was ready to go down, but where was August?

He was closeted with "Nemesis," in the shape of Armida Sutton.

At the very moment that Musa had left his side to go to her own room, attended by the housekeeper, and as he himself was about to repair to his dressing-room, a card was put in his hand by the hall footman, who said in explanation:

"The lady arrived a few minutes ago, sir, and requested to see you alone as soon as you arrived."

" 'Miss Armida Sutton!' " said Mr. Carew, reading the card. "This is most strange. Where did you show the lady?"

"In the crimson reception-room, sir."

August Carew, without a moment's delay, went to a small front room, on the right hand of the entrance hall, known as the crimson reception-room. He opened the door and entered unannounced.

A glowing coal fire in a polished steel grate rather overheated this small room. Yet Armida, closely wrapped in furs, sat in a large, cushioned easy-chair before the fire.

"Miss Sutton!" exclaimed Mr. Carew, scarcely able to repress his surprise and displeasure at her inopportune presence.

"You are astonished to see me here, Mr. Carew," she said, rising and facing him.

"Indeed, yes. But pray resume your seat. You seem wearied," he said, as he noticed the paleness of her face.

"I am wearied," she answered, with a sigh, as she sank again into the large armchair.

"Why, when did you arrive?" inquired Mr. Carew.

"But a few moments in advance of yourself. In fact, I left Washington and came down to Richmond on the same boat that brought yourself."

"Is that possible? You were on the boat with us? And we did not know it? How could that have been?" inquired Mr. Carew, in astonishment.

"I had a stateroom in the lower cabin. And I never left it," answered Armida, with a strange smile.

"Did my wife know that you were there?"

"No."

"Did she expect you here?"

"No."

"Does she know that you have arrived?"

"No."

"Pardon me. I have been rudely putting questions, when I should rather have hastened to notify Mrs. Carew of the presence of her friend," said Mr. Carew, as he stretched his hand toward the bell.

"Stop!" exclaimed Armida, arresting his hand.

He paused and gazed at her now in undisguised amazement.

"Stop, Mr. Carew. My visit is to yourself alone. I requested to see you for a few moments alone. I have something of the most vital importance to yourself to say, but you had better sit down, sir. I cannot talk to a man who stands and stares at me."

"I beg pardon," said Mr. Carew. And he sat down, immediately attentive.

"In the first place, Mr. Carew, I must ask you whether or not you received certain important letters, postmarked Rockville?" inquired Armida.

"Anonymous letters?" questioned Mr. Carew, in his turn.

"Yes, necessarily anonymous."

"I did," grimly replied August Carew.

"And—read them?" exclaimed Armida, in surprise.

"No, Miss Sutton. I read only the first one. It touched the honor of a lady I revere. As soon as I gathered its meaning I threw it into the fire. And the half-dozen or more letters in the same handwriting that followed it at intervals I burned as they came, without even opening them."

"I am sorry you did that. And I think, before our interview is ended, that you will be sorry also," said Armida, gravely. "I wrote those anonymous letters from

Rockville," she added, fixing her cold blue eyes full upon his face.

"I am deeply shocked to hear you say it, Miss Sutton."

"I wished to warn you of a great peril to your peace and honor. I wished to save you from great sorrow and humiliation. If you had deigned to read those letters you would have been warned, and must have been saved. It was a very delicate matter for a lady, especially for a young unmarried lady, to interfere in. Nothing but the highest sense of duty urged me to move in such a matter. And at first I confess that I was too timid to sign my name to my notes of warning. I now deeply regret my own want of moral courage and your want of faith. And I come now, with great pain, to repair, as far as I am able, the evil that my moral cowardice and your distrust have wrought. Though, indeed, I fear it is too late to do any good, except for the poor, forsaken child."

"Child?" echoed Mr. Carew.

"Yes, Musa Percie's poor, forsaken child."

"Miss Sutton!"

"Mr. Carew?"

"You are a lunatic. And it is only because I am now sure that you are a lunatic that I do not——"

"Show me the door? Well, yes; I expected something like that. But before you show me the door, Mr. Carew, will you please to read this, and form your own opinion on it," she said, placing an enveloped letter in his hand.

"Is it anonymous?" he curtly demanded.

"No, indeed. Read it."

He looked at the envelope. It was postmarked New York, February 1st.

He opened it, and read as follows:

WILLOW COTTAGE, Harlem, N. Y., February 1, 18—.

MY DEAR MRS. WHITE:—I write to inform you that your baby is very ill. She was taken in the night with her throat. I sent for the doctor this morning. And he prescribed for her, but she is no better. I write to you by the very first mail. Old Cassy thinks that you had better come on immediately. In the meantime I and the doctor will do all that we can to save her. Respectfully yours, MARGARET SEAFORTH.

"And pray, what has this letter to do with me or my

wife?" sternly demanded August Carew, when he had finished the reading.

"Merely this," coolly responded Armida—"that Musa Percie and Mrs. White are one and the same person. Her child is at nurse with a poor widow named Margaret Seaforth, the writer of that letter, and who knows the child's mother only as Mrs. White. Mrs. Seaforth lived at Willow Cottage, Harlem, where she, assisted by Musa's confidential servant, old Cassy, took care of the deserted babe. Since that I have discovered, by following up the clew, that the widow Seaforth has removed with her charge to a house called the Brown Cottage at Inwood, on the Hudson. Old Cassy returned to her mistress about the time of that removal."

"Miss Sutton," exclaimed Mr. Carew, rousing himself from the spellbound state in which he had listened to her words, "I do not believe one syllable of the atrocious calumnies you have uttered against the pure name of my beloved wife. Nothing but a suspicion of your insanity has led me to endure your presence here thus long, and now——"

"You wish to show me out? Do not take that trouble. I am going. But show that letter to your wife. Watch her as she reads it. Notice how she looks, what she says. And, oh! when by her looks and actions, if not by her words, she shall have confessed her sin—however you may see fit to deal with her—exhort her, I beg you, to atone for the past by taking care of her innocent child. Tell her that deeply as she has sinned——"

"I will hear no more!" fiercely interrupted August Carew. "I have listened too long to these infamous slanders. I will not hear another word. I shall, indeed, take this letter to my beloved and honored wife, but it will only be to consult with her how best to deal with her calumniators. And now, Miss Sutton, leave my house at once, and never return to it, lest I should forget that I am a gentleman, and that you are, or ought to be, a lady."

"Oh, I am going. Never fear that I shall trouble you again. Show that letter to your wife! Do, Mr. Carew! Good-night."

And with a mocking courtesy Armida Sutton left the room and the house.

August Carew had never been in such a rage in all his life.

If any man had spoken and acted as Armida Sutton had done—well, there would probably have been a trial for murder, and the jury would have acquitted the prisoner without leaving their seats.

Musa sat still in her chamber, waiting for August to come and take her down to dinner.

She thought that he was very long in coming, and she arose and changed the tea rose in her hair for a fresher one from the vase.

And then, just as she resumed her seat, the door opened, and her husband entered.

She arose at once to accompany him downstairs.

But he stopped her by lifting his hand.

"No, sit still, my love. I have something curious to show you, and something still more curious to tell you. You will soon see that you will have to use discretion, my beloved, in the choice of your associates, and even in the distribution of your charities," he said, as he drew a seat to her side and unfolded the letter in his hand.

She looked at him with smiling eyes, for she thought he was going to admonish her—as her old lawyer guardian so often did—on her bad habit of indiscriminate and excessive alms-giving.

"Will you read this letter, my love, and tell me who is the Mrs. White and who is the child referred to in it?" he gently inquired, putting the letter in his wife's hands.

The next instant he was appalled by the effect of his own act.

Musa's head fell back against her chair; her face grew ghastly in its awful pallor; her features were drawn with anguish; her hands fell helpless by her side.

"Musa—Musa, my dearest! what is all this?" cried August Carew, starting up and bending over her in alarm. "Speak to me, dear wife!"

"I was born with the curse upon me! I was born to bring ruin on myself and on all I love! I was born with the curse upon me, and the curse is fulfilled to-

day!" she wailed, in a voice of such utter woe that her husband was appalled as he heard her.

Yet not even now, when gazing on her, did he for one instant suspect her of any wrong-doing. He was deeply troubled by her misery.

"Great Heaven, Musa!" he cried, "who is this erring woman in whose case you take so deep an interest as to make it your own?—for whom you agonize as for yourself, or your sister?"

"Oh-h-h!" she groaned, "that case is mine. That erring woman is myself. Now curse me! kill me! I am ready to die."

He recoiled from her and dropped into his chair, completely overcome. His agony was as great as her own, and the greatest part of it was his deep pity for her misery; for he loved her, he loved her, and he knew beyond all peradventure that she loved him utterly.

There was a heavy silence between them, broken only by her deep convulsive sobs, that rent her husband's heart.

Oh, what a coming home was this! The serpent had entered their Eden, and its beauty and peace were devastated and destroyed.

At length she ventured an anxious, fearful glance at his face.

The love, pity, horror and utter misery of its expression shocked her out of all feeling for her own trouble. She could suffer, but she could not endure to see him suffer! And now, besides, she saw that in her wild, despairing self-accusation she had given him an impression of her fault, darker, deeper, fouler than the truth warranted. She must set that right at once; for oh! she could not rest for an instant under such a shameful ban, and she could not bear to see him suffer so!

She started from her chair and dropped at his feet, and clasped his knees.

"August! August! look at me!" she prayed, gazing up to him.

But though he did not repulse her, his hands covered his face.

"August! August! look at me, she prayed, in anguish.

"Do not kneel to me, my lost love! I cannot bear to

see you there, so low," he said, with sorrowful tenderness. "I have no reproaches for you, Musa. Heaven knows that I have only love and pity for you—though we must part to-night, Musa, and part—forever!"

"Oh, no, no, no! We must not part! I cannot leave you! It would break my heart!" she cried, wild with anguish.

"We must part, Musa, though our parting should break both our hearts—as it will!" he added, in a choking voice.

She sobbed aloud, and clung to his knees, but found no voice to answer him.

"Listen, Musa! My love, I shall love forever, notwithstanding all. Listen, I will do all that I can to help and shield you in this trial. I shall leave here to-night——" his voice broke down with emotion, and nothing but her heart-rending sobs were heard for a few moments, until he recovered himself and resumed.

"I shall leave this house to-night upon some plea of urgent necessity. 'Urgent necessity!' That will be a true plea. And you must remain here for the present, until I can devise some means of effecting a permanent separation, without publicity and without detriment to your name and fame."

"Oh, what do I care for my name and fame if I have not you?" she wildly broke forth. "What do I care for my life or soul? I swear to you, August, that if I lose you I will kill myself within the next hour. I will rush away and hurl myself from some precipice, or into some river, or across the track of some railway train! I swear it before high Heaven!"

"Oh, wild and reckless and ungovernable nature! How shall I deal with you?" said August, with a groan.

"Listen to me! Hear me! Hear before you judge! Oh, August, do not think worse of me than I deserve —than I could ever have deserved!" she cried, clinging to his knees, and dropping her beautiful, disheveled head upon her clinging hands.

"Heaven knows that I wish to believe the best of you, Musa. No lips but your own should have dared to accuse you to me without rebuke. From no lips but your own would I have believed——"

His voice broke down again, and he covered his agonized face with his hands.

"But you have received a wrong impression from my words. You have, indeed, dearest. Oh, listen to me, August, before you act upon your fatal sentence of—separation!" she gasped, as if the last word had suffocated her.

"Then rise, Musa, and sit beside me. I tell you that I cannot endure to see you there, so low. It humiliates me, as well as yourself," he said, taking both her hands in both of his, and raising her to her feet.

She sat down beside him, and dropping her head upon his shoulder, whispered:

"August, will you listen to my story?"

"Yes, Musa."

"Will you believe it?"

"Yes, for I know you to be a truthful woman."

"Notwithstanding that I kept a fatal secret from you?"

"Notwithstanding that."

"Noble, faithful heart, I will speak to you as to Heaven. August, do you know that I love you?"

"Beyond all peradventure, I know that you love me. I have never doubted your love. I never shall doubt it, though we part."

"I doubt very much whether we shall part, my love, my king. I doubt it very much," murmured Musa, with tender gravity. "August, will you believe me when I tell you, when I swear to you, that I never loved until I met you, unless—unless the gentle affection I bore my friends could be called love?"

"You never loved any one before me?" echoed August, in a low voice.

"Heaven knows that I never did."

"Then how, oh, Heaven! how could you have fallen from the glory of your womanhood?" he groaned, in an almost inaudible voice.

"I have not fallen," she answered, firmly. "You misinterpreted that wild confession. You did, indeed. I have not fallen, August; but oh! I have bitterly deceived and wronged you."

"I can scarcely understand you, Musa."

"I am going to make it clear. I am going to tell you

the whole sad story. It seems so easy to do that now, which it seemed so difficult, so impossible to do before. August, the whole of my offense against you was this—in concealing from you the fact of my former marriage."

"Your former marriage!" exclaimed Mr. Carew, nearly stupefied by this announcement.

"Yes, August. I had been a wife, and I was a mother and a widow when you married me."

"Musa, you astonish me by this intelligence. Yet I thank Heaven, from my soul I thank Heaven that this is so, rather than the terrible suspicion your own self-accusation aroused should be true. Now tell me all about it. Who was the man? Why did you marry him without love? And why was the marriage kept a secret from all the world as well as from me?" he inquired, as he settled himself to listen.

And then with her beautiful face hidden on his shoulder, and her shining, purple-black ringlets flowing over his bosom, she told him the whole of her sad story, with scrupulous exactness, from beginning to end; then said:

"And now, August, I have told you all, everything. I have not a secret from you in the world. Do you believe me?"

"From my soul I do. Heaven forbid that I should doubt you," he answered, earnestly.

"And oh, August, when I kept the secret of my former marriage from you, Heaven knows that I did it from the great love I bore you. I loved you so, oh, I loved you so! I wanted to be your wife, your own, and to be with you forever at all cost. I did not dare to tell you the secret of my former marriage, because I could not prove it, and I did not know how you would receive the news so unexpected. I feared to startle you, to repel you, to lose you, August. And oh! to have lost you would have been death, and wore than death, to me! I did not dare to risk losing you by telling you my secret. I kept it from you to the last, August. But oh! none but the Searcher of All Hearts knows how terribly I have suffered in keeping that secret from you."

"I know it, my love, I know it. Ah! Musa, if you had but trusted my heart! I would have received your confidence then, as I receive it now. I would have believed your

own account of your marriage, as I believe it now. And you, oh, my love, would have been spared so much of anguish," he said, as he tenderly caressed her.

"Yes, but I have deserved every pang that I have suffered. I sinned against you and against love. I was an infidel toward you and toward love. I could not trust you or your love with my secret. And so that secret, like a poisoned arrow, has been rankling in my bosom all these months. And I deserved it all. I do not ask you to forgive me, my love, my king, because I feel that you have done so already."

"From the depths of my soul I have, dear wife," he earnestly answered, kissing her.

"Oh, the peace, the rest! Oh, the peace, the rest!" she said, with the sigh of an infinite relief, as her head dropped on his bosom.

"And now we will talk about your child. Young mother, you must have suffered cruelly in leaving your child," he said, sympathetically.

"Oh, I did, I did, August!"

"You shall suffer no more, my darling. Listen, Musa. I have a plan by which we can receive and acknowledge your child as our own, without exciting any gossip——"

"As 'our' own? oh, August!" she said, with much emotion.

"Yes, dearest; for your child shall be my child."

"Oh, God-like soul! what can I do to merit all your wondrous love?"

"Trust me, Musa; dear wife, trust me. But now to my plan. We will make arrangements to go to Europe immediately. You and I are strong young people, Musa, and will not mind crossing the ocean in the dead of winter."

"Oh, no," she said, willing and anxious to agree to everything he might propose and eager to hear his plan.

"We will take our child with us when we go. She is about a year old, I think you said?"

"A little over a year old."

"Well, we will take her to Europe with us. We will remain abroad two or three years. And when we bring her back with us who will question that she is not our own?"

"Oh, August, August, would you indeed do all that for me? for me, so weak and so unworthy?" she murmured, in a voice full of emotion.

"I would do anything to insure your happiness, dear wife, for I love and trust you—you who are neither weak nor unworthy," he answered, caressing her.

"Oh, this, indeed, is love! This is love such as I never even dreamed of! This is love without self-love! How shall I ever deserve it?" she said, clasping her hands together.

"By loving and trusting me, dear wife."

"I will love and trust you, utterly and forever. Ah, August, I realize now the words of the Lord: 'To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.' Oh, the great relief! August!"

"Well, my own?"

"Do you know that I was threatened with exposure? As I sat down in the carriage that was to take us to the steamboat I picked up a letter directed to myself. I wish I had it now to show you, but I have not. In my terror I burned it up. But it threatened me cruelly. It told me that Nemesis should meet me at Richmond."

"Well, my darling, Nemesis, invoked by an enemy, has appeared and vanished. Instead of being an avenging spirit she has been converted by love into a delivering angel. For all things are possible to love," replied August.

"Yes, I know now that love is the strongest power—strong enough to put the hosts of Satan to flight. Certainly strong enough to paralyze the malignant power of mine enemy. Mine enemy! August, who is mine enemy? Who sent that letter to you, or put it into your hands?"

"Armida Sutton," gravely replied Mr. Carew.

"Armida Sutton!" exclaimed Musa, in amazement—"my foster-sister! the poor girl that I took from the barren Montgomery farm and made my most cherished companion! When and where did she do this? Tell me all about it, August."

Mr. Carew commenced and told his wife all the details of the visit paid him by her false and treacherous friend.

"I used sometimes to think she envied me; but I never dreamed she hated me to such a great extent. She must

have been a very artful and vigilant spy upon me to have discovered all she knows. And that letter which I missed she must have picked up in my room," said Musa, who never imagined that Armida Sutton, with all her treachery, would have descended to commit a felony by breaking open drawers and caskets to possess herself of forbidden secrets.

"And now, dearest wife, let us forget Miss Sutton and all connected with her. Now that you are under your husband's protection her malice is powerless to hurt you," said Mr. Carew.

"Yes, we will forget her. And that means we will forgive her. Oh, August, my heart is so full of gratitude and love that it has no room for any other passion. Oh, I thank Heaven for this great deliverance. Oh, the rest and peace. Oh, the perfect rest and the infinite peace."

CHAPTER IV.

A DREADFUL SHOCK.

The next morning Musa wrote to Mrs. Seaforth, informing that good woman of her marriage with Mr. Francis August Carew, and advising her of their intention to go in a few days to Inwood to reclaim the child Musette.

Musa was very happy now! Never, in all her young life, had she experienced, or even imagined, such happiness as she now possessed.

Her deliverance from the heavy burden of her secret; the great proof she had received of her worshiped husband's boundless love and faith; the near prospect of reunion with her dear child; the certain protection and security of her own fair fame—all these combined to make her present, in contrast to her past, like heaven after purgatory.

She agreed with her husband's opinion, that they had best make all their arrangements for the voyage to Europe before going to New York to claim the child, so that there should be no necessity for their return to Richmond previous to their embarkation for Liverpool.

With this understanding the husband and wife vigorously set about making their preparations for going abroad.

Musa wrote to Mr. Lyttleton Locke and to Mrs. Shrewsbury, advising them of the proposed voyage, and placing her house on Vermont avenue in their charge.

Mr. Carew put all his affairs in the hands of a competent agent, who was to attend to them during his absence.

In one week from the time of their first arrival at home all their arrangements were completed, and they were to leave Richmond for New York the next morning.

That last evening they were sitting together before the comfortable coal fire in their drawing-room, when the messenger came from the post office, bringing in the mailbag.

Mr. Carew opened it, and took out and divided the letters. There were half a dozen business letters for himself, which he laid on the table, to be read and turned over to his agent.

And there were three for Musa—one from Mr. Locke, one from Mrs. Shrewsbury, and one from Maggie Seaforth. Musa eagerly seized the latter.

"It is from Mrs. Seaforth," she said, with a smile of delight, "and it tells me of my child."

He smiled in sympathy with her, as he began to open his own letters.

But as she read her cheeks paled, her eyes fixed with an intense gaze upon the lines she perused, and her hand trembled in turning the page. At length, with a low cry of anguish, she dropped the letter, and fell back in her chair.

August sprang to her side.

"Musa, my darling, what is it?" he exclaimed, taking her hand and bending anxiously over her.

"Oh, my child! my child! Oh, my child! my child!" she wailed, in despair.

"Sick? Dead? Tell me, my darling?" he murmured.

"Oh, worse! worse! Read! read!" she groaned, pointing to the fallen letter, and breaking into a sudden storm of sobs and tears.

But he could not read while she was in that condition. He stood by her, gently caressing her, until the violence of her emotion had subsided, and left her weak as an infant. Then he brought her a glass of wine, and persuaded her to drink it.

"Now, my dearest, can you tell me what this means?" he inquired, as he took the empty glass and set it down.

"Oh, read! read! I cannot tell you," she gasped, for she was still half-breathless, and sobbing faintly at short intervals.

August picked up the letter, and, smoothing out its crumpled folds, read as follows:

THE BROWN COTTAGE, Inwood, January 15, 18—.

MY DEAR MRS. CAREW:—Oh, my dear ma'am, I don't know what you'll think of me, or think of us all. So many troubles, I don't know which to tell you about first. But, as the pious Mr. Wilks says, "tribulations abound all over the world."

First, I must tell you, ma'am, that I am married to Mr. Wilks, which will surprise you very much, because I never expected to be married the third time, any more than you did, ma'am, who used to say you never would.

The very day after we were married, my boy, Sam, ran away, and went to sea. He said "he couldn't stand so many stepfathers." And I only gave him one at a time, ma'am. And I am sure his first stepfather, my poor, dear Jack Seaforth, who was killed in the fight with the pirate, was as good to him as ever his own father could have been.

And talking of his own father, ma'am, reminds me how surprised I was when I see your new name. It is Carew, which my first husband's name was—Harold Carew, though we always called him Harry, or Hal. And Sam was his son, though people got to calling him Sam Seaforth, instead of Sam Carew, because my name, by my second marriage, being Seaforth, it came more natural.

No wonder my Sam ran away to sea. Running away to sea runs in the family, I think, ma'am.

Sam's own father, Harold Carew, ran away to sea, ma'am, though he had good cause, having been very badly treated by his father, which his name was Colonel Harold Carew, the same name as your husband's, ma'am. And if you also were any way related to your husband's family, that would account for the great likeness there is between my boy Sam and yourself. And I know folks down South often marry their kinfolks to keep all the land in the same family, because my poor, dear Hal used to tell me so.

Oh, dear, ma'am, your letter came to me in the midde of my trouble about Sam. But that was nothing to what followed.

When I got your letter telling me you were married to Mr. Carew, and were coming to take the child home, I felt very sorry indeed at the idea of parting from the little darling.

And so did Mr. Wilks, who loves her as if she was his own, and calls her his little dove-eyed darling, and wants to make her a lamb of the fold.

But when Mary Morris heard about it, she was the wildest thing that ever I saw. She had a regular bad fit of hystericks. And even when that was over, she sobbed and cried, and cried and sobbed, day in and day out, without eating a mouthful of victuals, or letting the child out of her arms one single minute.

She said she wished somebody would take and cut off her head, and put her out of her misery, before ever the time should come for her to part from the baby that she had nursed at her own breast by day, and cuddled to her own heart at night, and ever so many crazy things like that she said, so that I ought to have been warned against what happened, only you see, ma'am, I didn't suspect.

On Monday morning Mary said to me:

"When do you expect this fine lady to come and tear my baby away from my bosom?"

"On Thursday," I said. "And I shall be glad when all this fuss is over."

No more was said between us then.

Mary went away sobbing and crying and begging somebody to cut her head off and put her out of her misery, in her usual crazy way.

And still, ma'am, I didn't expect anything wrong or dangerous.

But on Tuesday morning, ma'am, Mary didn't make her appearance. I thought she had cried all night and was making up for it by sleeping late in the morning. So I didn't begin to get uneasy till the morning was half over. And then I thought she had cried herself sick, and that the baby must want attention.

So I went to the room, and it was empty, and the drawers were empty, and the wardrobes were empty. And Mary was gone, and the baby was gone, and everything was gone. And on the dressing-table there was a note written to you, ma'am, which I will send you in this letter.

Oh, I screamed and screamed, until Mr. Wilks came running up to ask me what was the matter.

I told him all about what had happened, as well as I could for crying.

He said that the police must be notified. And he put on his hat and ran down to the platform at the foot of the hill, and waited and jumped on the first train for New York.

And he informed the police. And spent the whole day searching for Mary and the child, but did not then get so much as the least clew to either of them.

So he came home at night, but brought me no satisfaction. He says, dear ma'am, that the woman seems to have baffled pursuit and to have got clear off with the child.

She had a plenty of money, because you paid her such good

wages and made her so many presents, that she was able to save a great deal to run away with.

Mr. Wilks has gone to New York again to resume his search, but left me orders to be sure to write to you to-day and tell you of this misfortune, which I had rather died than met with.

I send you the letter Mary Morris left. It was not sealed, so we took the liberty of reading it to see if it would give us any clue to her whereabouts. But it didn't.

Hoping and trusting and praying that we may soon find the woman and the child, I remain, dear ma'am, respectfully yours,

MARGARET WILKS.

August read this letter very hastily, as Musa had read it—skimming over, or skipping altogether, the long preamble, with which poor Maggie had tried to put off as long as possible the evil moment of telling the dreadful news. But when he got to the story of the child's abduction by the nurse, he read it with the most careful attention.

Then he picked up and examined the inclosed note that had been written by Mary Morris.

It was badly spelled, worse written, blotted with tears, and as follows:

BROWN COTTIDGE, Mundy nite.

MADAM:—I can't part with the baby that I have nursed at my breast ever sense she was borne. It would kill me *dead* to do it. You promussed when you took her you would take me too, so I should nevver be parted from her. But now you are a going to brake your prommus and take her away from me. You wrote to Mrs. Seaforth, as I had better look out for another place, as it would not be kunveenyunt for you to take me to Urope with you. And how you would pay me handsome to make it up to me for the disopintmint. Jest as if money could make up to me for the baby as I have slept with in my buzzum all her life. If you had kep your word to me, and took me along of the baby, I would a served you faithful for the baby's sake, and kep your secret too; for I ain't a foole, and I expect as there *is* a secret. But no, you wouldent trust me—you wouldent keep your word with me—you wanted to cut loose from evvryboddy as knowed enything about the baby.

And so I can't part with the baby, I tell you. It is all I have got in the world to love, except my poor Dick, and Lord noes where he is.

But I rite this letter out of pitty for you, who had no pitty for me, to let you noe, as the child will be as well took care of as ever she was. I love her better than my own hart's blood, and I would work my fingers to the bones for her, and go hungry and cold before she should want ennything as she has evver been used to.

I love her a hunded thousin times better than you do, 'cause I nevver could a gone and left her and stade away from her like you did.

It won't be enny use, your trying to find me and the child, 'cause you can't do it, maddam. But you can cumfut yourself by thinkin' as the child will be as well took care of as evver she was. For so she will be as true as I tell you. Yours rispectfully,

MARY MORRIS.

August read this letter, folded it up with the first one, put both in his pocket, and paused reflectively.

"Well, I have heard of children being stolen for spite, for profit and for revenge; but I never before heard of a child being stolen for love," he mused.

Then, turning to his sobbing wife, he said:

"My darling, I think you may take comfort. This woman who has carried off your child, for love of it, will certainly take good care of it, as long as she keeps it. But she cannot keep it from us many days, no, nor many hours, after our arrival in New York. She is evidently a simple-minded creature, and, unaided as she is, and hampered with the stolen child, she will not be able to elude the police for twenty-four hours. And now," said Mr. Carew, speaking from some natural curiosity, as well as from his wish to divert his wife's thoughts from the subject of her child, "what is this that the woman writes about her first husband. He appears to have been the absconding son of old Colonel Carew, of Pirate's Peak?"

"The 'absconding' son!" exclaimed Musa, indignantly —"the discarded son, you mean, dear, if you know anything about it. Colonel Carew treated his boy shamefully, shamefully, and literally drove him from the house —the poor, motherless lad. If it had not been for that, I should like Colonel Carew very much; but as it is, whenever I think of his treatment of his son, I find it difficult to be civil to him, even in my own house."

"You shock me, Musa. Who told you this?"

"Half a dozen or more of the neighbors down on the bay side."

"What was the cause of his ill-treatment of the boy?"

"His own overbearing disposition and ungovernable temper."

"And do you suppose that the first husband of this

many-times-married young woman was really Harold Carew?"

"I don't know, August dear. I hardly read that part of the letter. I skipped away down to where it told of my child. Read that part over again, please."

Mr. Carew drew the letter from his pocket, opened it, turned to the page that treated of the writer's first husband, found the paragraph, and read:

"'How surprised I was when I see your new name. It is Carew, which my first husband's name was Harold Carew. * * * No wonder my Sam run away to sea. Running away to sea runs in that family. Sam's own father ran away to sea, though he had good cause, having been very badly treated by his father, which his name was Colonel Harold Carew, the same name as your husband's, ma'am.'

"There, dear, that is all she says about the name, though I think it is conclusive evidence that the discarded son of Colonel Carew was her husband and the father of her little vagrant Sam. Whatever became of this unlucky Harold Carew? Do you know?"

"Yes, he was drowned at sea. That is all I ever knew of my landlady's first husband. Singularly enough I never heard his name until I got this letter. And as for Sam, he was always called Sam Seaforth. So you see, in the fifteen months that I knew this woman I never chanced to hear the name of Harold Carew."

"And what a thin paper wall there was between you all this time. And this young vagrant who has run away to sea is really the grandson and heir of 'Old Harry?'"

"Of course, he must be so."

"Well, my darling, when we go to New York to look after our own child, whom I feel sure we shall speedily recover unharmed, we must also try to find this runaway lad and bring him to the knowledge of his grandfather, for surely 'the Old Harry' himself will not refuse to receive and educate his only son's orphan boy."

"I don't know. He is 'the Old Harry,' you know. He richly deserves the name and acts out the character. He may refuse to see the lad."

"In that case we will take him ourselves, dear. He is our little cousin and bears our name. He is a Carew. We will rear and educate him."

Musa looked at him with more of admiration and honor than she could venture to express.

"How is it," she thought, "that I, who feel so unworthy, should be blessed with the love and trust of such a man? His every thought and word and deed are so noble!"

It was now growing late. And as they were to set out very early the next morning for their journey northward, they retired to get what rest they could.

They traveled by the quickest route that was then practicable, and reached Inwood late on the evening of the second day.

As the train "slowed" up to the little way-station, and Musa caught sight of the Brown Cottage on the hill, half hidden even in midwinter by the evergreens, her heart almost ceased to beat in the intensity of her anxiety.

She felt that in a very few moments she should know whether her child was there, ready to be clasped to her bosom, or whether it was still missing.

When the train stopped, Mr. Carew carefully helped her out of the car, gave his servant a check to receive their baggage, and then drew her arm within his own, to help her in walking up the hill to the house.

"Courage! courage, my love! You are nearly sinking. Keep your heart! for if we do not find her here, it is but a question of little time. We shall find her tomorrow or the next day. That simple woman can never hide long from our vigilant search," whispered August, as they reached the top of the hill and went up to the cottage.

August rang the bell, while Musa sank, half fainting, on the seat in the little rustic porch.

The door was opened immediately by Maggie Seaforth, or rather Mrs. Wilks herself.

"My child?" gasped Musa, and she could utter no more.

"Oh, ma'am!" wailed Maggie Wilks, and she could say no more.

"Come in, sir," said the parson, appearing on the scene and addressing them. "Pray come in, madam! This is a most unfortunate affair. And I regret to say that, as yet, we have not succeeded in gaining any clew to the

woman or the child. The police, however, are on the watch, and we hope for better success to-morrow."

August gently seated Musa in a large easy-chair, stooped and whispered to her to keep up her spirits, for that he would find her child, and then he stood up and inquired:

"When is there a train to New York?"

"There will be a train in fifteen minutes, sir," Mr. Wilks answered.

"Then I shall go down by it."

"Oh, where are you going, August?" inquired Musa, in a faint voice; for in her miserable state of mind, she hated to lose sight of him for an instant.

"I am going down to New York, my dear, to get advertisements, offering a large reward for the recovery of the child, inserted in all the morning papers. I shall return to-night if I can get a train. When is the latest train up to-night?" he inquired, turning to Mr. Wilks.

"There is one stops here at eleven twelve, sir."

"That will do; I shall return by that. And now I must be quick, as I have only ten minutes left. Give me a personal description of the woman. You, Mr. Wilks, if you please. My wife is not capable of exertion at this moment," said Mr. Carew, taking out his tablets and preparing to write, and take notes for the advertisement.

"Mary Morris—short in stature, plump in form, full face, fair complexion, red cheeks, blue eyes, yellow hair, very soft smile, very low voice," said the parson.

"That will do for the woman. Now for the child," said Mr. Carew, writing rapidly.

"Musette—thirteen months old, large for her age; round and plump in form, round plump face, small regular features, rich dark complexion, crimson cheeks and lips, deep dark-brown eyes, very earnest and wistful in expression; dark eyebrows; dark, silky, short curling hair."

"That will do for the child. What had they on when they left?" inquired Mr. Carew, as his pencil flew over the tablet.

"We cannot tell. They had such an extensive wardrobe, and the woman managed to get it all away during the night."

"Then this will have to do. Time is up. Good-night, my love. You had better go to bed. Mrs. Wilks, pray see to my wife. She needs attention. Good-night, dear. I shall offer a thousand dollars reward for the recovery of the child," said Mr. Carew, as he hastily pressed the hand of his wife, and hurried away to catch the train, whose warning whistle was even then sounding.

Mr. Wilks politely ran after him to see him safely off.

"Oh, Maggie!" said Musa, as soon as the two women were left alone, "where do you think that woman can be? Where has she taken my poor, dear, little child?"

"Dear ma'am, I would 'most give the ears off my head to know myself, but I don't," replied the weeping woman.

"Does Mr. Wilks think we can find her?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am; he says we will be sure to find her, sooner or later."

"Oh, Maggie, do you think that woman will be good to my poor little Musette?"

"Good to her, ma'am? Why, she would take the heart out of her bosom and give it to the child, if the child needed it. The way she do love that child, ma'am, is beyond belief; it is, indeed."

"I am rightly punished for delegating my maternal duty and privilege to any other woman. The nurse loves the child with a mother's love——"

"That she does, ma'am," interrupted Maggie.

"And no doubt the child loves the nurse as if the nurse were her mother," sighed Musa.

"She does that, ma'am. She dotes on Mollie Morris," assented Maggie Wilks, with cruel candor.

At this moment Mr. Wilks returned from seeing Mr. Carew off on the train for New York.

Perceiving that Musa still sat with her bonnet and wrappings on, he turned to his wife and said:

"Margaret, had you not better show this lady to her room, where she can lay off her wraps, and order tea?"

"Oh, yes, I had indeed! Trouble makes me forget everything. But Mr. Wilks, he is so thoughtful. Come, ma'am. Your room is all ready for you. The same room. And the supper will be on the table by the time you are ready for it," said Maggie, leading the way up-

stairs to the pretty chamber over the parlor that had always been kept sacred to the use of the real mistress of the house.

But as soon as Musa entered this room, so filled with memories and associations connected with her lost child, all her remaining firmness gave way, and she threw herself upon the bed in a paroxysm of hysterical grief.

Her poor friend sought to soothe her with words of hope and confidence, but without effect.

"Go away, Maggie," she said, through her heavy sobs. "Go, go! leave me to myself, to wrestle with this trouble as I may. I shall get better sooner if left alone. Go."

Maggie went, sorrowfully enough, and she did the next best thing she knew how to do. She prepared the nice cream toast and the fine orange Pekoe tea that she knew Musa could enjoy when she could take nothing else.

An hour passed away before Musa came downstairs again. She was now more composed in manner than she had been since her entrance into the house.

After supper Mr. and Mrs. Wilks and Musa sat up in the parlor to wait for Mr. Carew, who returned a little while after midnight.

He had made the round of the daily newspaper offices, and had the advertisement for the absconding woman and abducted child, giving a full personal description of each, and offering a large reward for their discovery, inserted in them all.

And his hopes of a successful issue were so sanguine as to cheer the spirits of the sorrowing mother.

Early the next morning Mr. Carew, accompanied by Mr. Wilks, went again to the city, to see the chief of police, and consult with that experienced officer as to the next best steps to be taken for the recovery of the lost child.

Musa remained at the cottage with her humble friend Maggie.

She sat in her own room for the greater part of the day, and Maggie sat with her.

Inspired by the confidence of her husband and of the minister, who were both convinced that they should soon

recover the child, Musa felt in better spirits than on the preceding day.

As she sat with Mrs. Wilks, suddenly pity for that patient woman moved her heart.

"My poor Maggie," she said, "how selfish I have been to think only of my own child, when your boy is also gone. Have you heard any news of him at all?"

"Yes, dear ma'am, I have; but the news came too late for me to bring him back. He shipped as cabin-boy aboard the *Banshee,* merchant ship, bound from New York to Liverpool. I got the news the day after the *Banshee* sailed. So it was too late to do any good."

"Well now, Maggie, I want to talk to you about your son and his father. You wrote to me that his father's name was Harold Carew."

"Yes, ma'am, and he was the only son of a horrid, awful, domineering old Turk, down South somewhere, who wasn't content with abusing his own poor slaves, but abused his own only son to that extent as to drive him away from home."

"Yes, I know all about that. But do you know, or do you remember that your boy's father was a gentleman, and that your boy himself is the heir to one of the finest bayside estates in Maryland?"

"Yes, I know, but what good is that, dear ma'am? That horrid old wretch—Lord forgive me for using profane language—cast off his son, and it an't likely that he will even so much as look at his grandson," said Maggie, drying her eyes with her white muslin apron.

"I differ with you. Colonel Carew, I have heard, regretted his extreme harshness to his only son when it was too late. And he would gladly have recalled him to his home. He did advertise for his son, but his advertisement was never answered. And I think that when he hears that his son left a son, he will be ready to welcome the boy with gladness. But you must be ready with the proofs of your marriage with Harold Carew, and of your child's birth."

"Oh, I can be ready enough with all them. But it will be no good, ma'am; not a bit," sighed Maggie, despairingly.

"Would you object to letting me see these proofs?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; not a bit," said Maggie, as she arose and passed into the next room, from which she presently returned, bringing a handsome japanned box, which she placed upon her lap, after she had resumed her seat.

"My poor Hal brought this for me from China, ma'am. It's very valuable, I believe, and many is the time I could have sold it for a good sum. But I never would. I kept it through all the days of my poverty, and kept all my treasure in it," she said, as she unlocked the box and displayed its contents.

They consisted principally of letters and papers. But on top was a morocco case, which Maggie took out and opened. It contained double miniatures.

"Here, ma'am, is a true likeness of my poor Hal, and one of his own mother. Look at them," said Maggie, putting the case in the hands of the lady."

"This is very good proof of Sam's parentage at least, for there is a very strong likeness between Sam himself and this portrait of his father. Colonel Carew will be sure to know the boy by that likeness."

"The other miniature is my poor Hal's mother, ma'am."

"Colonel Carew's first wife? Yes, a pretty blonde; not at all like son or grandson," said Musa, studying the picture.

"And here, ma'am, are my marriage lines, which anybody may see the same recorded in the register of St. Paul's Church in the city. And all these letters, ma'am, are the letters which my poor Hal wrote to me before marriage and afterward," said Maggie, placing a large packet of papers in the hands of her friend.

"Yes, these are valuable. They must all be submitted to Colonel Carew," answered Musa, as she received them.

"This, dear ma'am, is my first wedding-ring. See what a thick, heavy gold ring it is. And on the inside, you can see for yourself, is engraved, 'Harold and Margaret Carew.'"

"Yes, this is also very valuable, I should think," said Musa, as she examined the ring.

"This, ma'am, is a daguerreotype of me and Sam and

my poor Jack taken together. And a time we had getting that baby to sit still long enough to be took," said Maggie, handing an old-fashioned case and picture, containing very good likenesses of the parents and child well grouped.

"This is excellent, Maggie. This also must be shown to Colonel Carew. I think your proofs are abundantly sufficient to establish the position of your son as the grandson of Colonel Harold Carew, and the heir of Pirate's Peak," said Musa, as she added the old-fashioned daguerreotype to the other "documents."

"And this—oh, dear me!—this is a curiosity!" said Maggie, as she produced another paper from the box, whose contents were not yet half exhausted.

"What is it? Another proof?" inquired Musa, without looking up from the picture that she was still engaged in studying.

"Oh, dear me, no, ma'am. It has got nothing to do with me nor Sam. Look at it, ma'am," said Maggie, handing the paper to the lady.

Musa took it carelessly, opened it, and uttered a cry of joy.

It was her missing marriage certificate!

CHAPTER V.

THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE.

"What in the world is the matter, dear ma'am?" exclaimed Maggie Seaforth, in amazement, as she gazed at the lady, who, after that first sharp cry, sat staring at the paper in her hands.

"Where did you get this document, Mrs. Wilks?" almost breathlessly inquired Musa.

"I got it out of my poor dear Jack's vest pocket."

"'Jack's vest pocket!'" echoed Musa, in perplexity.

"Yes, ma'am, Jack's vest pocket. When my poor, dear Jack was killed in the fight with the pirates, one of his messmates brought home his chest to me. And in it I found a second-hand suit of gentleman's clothes, which

my poor, dear Jack must have bought in London for his own Sunday's best. Only he never lived to wear it."

"Could you let me see that suit?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, certainly."

Maggie arose and went out, and when she returned she laid the required articles before the lady.

Musa took them up tenderly, piece by piece, and tried to recognize them. But by no effort of the imagination could she do so.

She knew from circumstantial evidence that this was the wedding dress of the Earl of Cressy, and that the right-hand pocket of the vest was the very pocket into which she had seen him thrust that paper handed by the minister, and which had been subsequently found there, and which turned out to be the missing marriage certificate.

"Maggie," she said, "I will give you a hundred dollars for this suit; they belonged to one who was once very dear to me."

"And maybe you knew the lady and gentleman whose marriage lines was in the vest pocket of the suit?"

"Yes, I knew them both very intimately. And therefore, Maggie, I would like to keep the 'lines,' as you call them."

"Oh, yes, certainly, ma'am; keep 'em if you want 'em. They are no use to me. Let me fold the clothes up for you, ma'am."

As she folded them Musa started and changed color, for suddenly she remembered her forgotten dream, in which she had been painfully hunting through New York, this very garment, and had seen it in the hands of this very woman, as she now saw it.

"Can such things be!
And overcome us, like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder?"

she said to herself, as she fell into deep reverie.

But her joy at the recovery of her marriage certificate soon put all speculative thoughts to flight.

Left alone, Musa read over her marriage certificate and reflected upon the strange chain of circumstances that had eventually restored it to her possession.

She was now doubly anxious for the speedy return of Mr. Carew from the city, for she was not only longing to receive news of her child, but to put in his hands this proof of her former marriage.

Truly, he had taken her own word for it; he had trusted her utterly; but she did not rejoice the less in this opportunity of justifying his trust.

To her impatience, the day passed slowly.

At length, at ten o'clock in the evening, Mr. Carew and Mr. Wilks arrived. Musa flew to receive them, and learn news of her missing child. Mr. Carew gave her that news before she had time to ask it.

"We have a clue to the woman and child at last, my dearest. A woman and child answering exactly to the description of the missing ones took the morning train, yesterday, from Jersey City to Washington. I started off a detective by this night's train to track them. And if you feel equal to the journey, we will ourselves go on in the morning."

"Oh, I thank Heaven! Yes, yes! we will go on to-morrow morning! I would go to-night—this hour—if it were possible!" eagerly exclaimed Musa, as she led the way from the front passage into the little drawing-room.

"I should have taken you on to-night, my dearest, if it had been possible to do so, after getting this clue to the child. But, you see, I had barely time to hurry off a detective, who was very near missing the train, after all. And there is no other for Washington until to-morrow," explained Mr. Carew, as he sat down.

Musa was eager to show her marriage certificate to Mr. Carew. So, pleading fatigue and the necessity of rising early the next morning, in order to reach the Washington train in time, Musa bade her friends good-night and retired to her room, whither she was soon followed by Mr. Carew.

"August, you trusted me without proof. And now I am very glad to give you the proof that will justify your trust. Read that, dear August," she said, with much emotion, as she placed the marriage certificate in his hand.

"Why, what is this?" he inquired, as he unfolded the paper.

"Read it, August, and you will see," she answered.

He turned to the top of the page, and read as follows:

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

This is to certify
That on the Third Day of February,
In the Year of Our Lord
One Thousand Eight Hundred and ——
In Bladensburg, in Prince George's County,
In the Diocese of Maryland,
I Joined Together in Holy Matrimony
Donald Hugh, Earl of Cressy,
And Musadora Percie,
According to the Rites of the Protestant Episcopal
Church in the United States of America,
And in Conformity with the Laws
Of the State of Maryland.
In Testimony Whereof I Herewith Put My Name,
This Third Day of February, Anno Domini
One Thousand Eight Hundred and ——.

DEMETRIUS MORTIMER, D.D.

"Did you think it necessary to show me this, my love?" inquired August Carew, half-reproachfully.

"No, no; but, oh! I am so glad to have it to show you," answered Musa, with a sigh of relief.

"You found this, probably, in some of your effects left here, in some box or casket where you had put it away safely and forgotten it?" said Mr. Carew.

"No; on the contrary, Maggie found it nearly a year ago, under the pocket, between the lining and the cloth of a second-hand vest, bought by her husband in London, and no doubt first sold by the valet of the late Earl, as his perquisites."

"A very strange recovery of a lost document. Did Mrs. Wilks know to whom it belonged?"

"No. If she had even suspected she would have put it in my hands long ago. But as it was she kept it in a box among her own papers, and only found it by accident this morning while she was collecting all the letters and papers relating to her own first marriage with young Harold Carew, and to the birth and baptism of their son Samuel, with a view to establish his claims upon his grandfather, old Colonel Carew of Pirate's Peak."

"Does she now know?"

"She does not. She only knows that the document concerned some one in whom I felt interested."

"Then, my dear Musa, I would leave her in that ignorance, at least for the present. And now what do you wish to do about this marriage certificate?"

"I have not thought of doing anything. I was delighted to have it for your satisfaction. That is all."

"For my satisfaction! I was satisfied before I saw it."

"Well, then, to justify your faith in me."

"My faith in you needed no justification, Musa. So you do not think of using this certificate?"

"No, unless you wish me to do so. If I had recovered this paper a few months ago I should have used it to prove my right to be recognized as the widow of the Earl of Cressy. But now that I am your wife, August, I am perfectly contented," earnestly answered Musa.

"But your child, Musa?"

"If my child had been a boy—the heir of the Dukedom of Montcalla—it would have been my duty to establish my former marriage for the security of that child's rights; but as she is a girl, and heiress to nothing whatever on her father's side, and could gain nothing from them but an empty title of courtesy, and as you have promised to adopt her for your own, I do not feel inclined to create a sensation by proclaiming my former marriage. Oh, August!" she suddenly exclaimed, breaking from the calmness of her former discourse, "I cannot bear the thought of my former marriage, much less the talk of it. Oh, August! I never loved the Earl of Cressy, though I thought I did when I consented to be his wife. But then I did not really know what love was. I mistook the mild affection I bore him for love. I never loved until I met you, August. I never even knew what love was till I loved you. Oh, August, do you believe me?"

"From my soul I believe you, dearest Musa."

"Then, in mercy, let me forget that I ever was married before. I am not like my little friend Maggie, who talks of her 'poor Hal,' and 'poor Jack,' and will some day speak of the Rev. Mr. Wilks as her 'poor Jerry.' I have loved but once. I can love but once. And I hate the self-deception that made me mistake a simple friendship for divine love. Then let me forget the past."

"You speak my own sentiments, dear Musa. By all means, let us forget the past. You might show your mar-

riage certificate to your old friend Mr. Locke, and to the few others that were in your confidence, but to no more."

"Let us settle it upon that, then," said Musa.

Very early the next morning they arose, in order to catch the first train from Jersey City to Washington.

With delays at Amboy, and delays at Philadelphia, and at Havre de Grace, and at Baltimore, the journey between New York and Washington, that is effected in six hours now, took twelve then. So it was late in the evening when the train ran into Washington station.

The detective who had been sent on the night before met them by appointment at the depot.

"What news?" eagerly inquired Mr. Carew, as they all stood upon the platform.

"Nothing satisfactory, I am sorry to say, sir. The woman and child answering to the description of the missing ones who left New York yesterday morning arrived here last evening, and were seen to get off the train. But that is the last news I have been able to hear of them. All trace of them was lost in the crowd that got out at the depot. I have spent the day in a vain search for them, sir; but still I feel quite confident of finding them, for I have taken such precautions that they cannot leave the city, or attempt to leave it, without being arrested."

Mr. Ferret, the detective, did find the woman and child; but the woman wasn't Mary Morris, nor was the child Musette. The detective had been following a false trail. Musa would have been crushed by the terrible disappointment had it not been for August's inspiring hopefulness and energy. He at once made comprehensive arrangements for continuing the search, which Mr. Ferret undertook to prosecute to a definite issue. The trip to Europe was of course abandoned; and August and Musa concluded to go to Raven Rocks, and there await the result of Mr. Ferret's efforts to find the missing child.

The journey to Raven Rocks, which had to be made by stage, would have been insupportable to Musa (considering the inclement season of the year) under ordinary circumstances. But now it was a relief to her surcharged heart. Its novelties and hardships diverted her mind from the disappointments she had experienced, and gave

a zest to the journey which she had by no means anticipated.

When they reached Eyrie, at the head of Bald Eagle Mountain, their trip by the stage ended, and the rest of the journey had to be made by private conveyance, which August requested the landlord of the Raven Rocks Inn to have in readiness for them—and also a wagon for their baggage, and their servants, Cassy and Cornwallis—immediately after breakfast.

On hearing what their destination was, Mr. Mosely, the landlord, indulged in a copious flow of gossip with regard to the old manor house. He said it was haunted by the ghost of an old servant, named Agatha, who was believed to have been murdered there several years before. He professed to have himself seen sights and heard sounds at the old house which froze his blood and made his hair stand on end. And when they reached the residence of Mr. Bullock, the land-steward, at the foot of the mountain, that gentlemen corroborated the statements of the landlord, and ended by saying:

"I do not believe in any supernatural cause for these disturbances on the one hand, nor can I conjecture any natural cause for them on the other. The affair up to this hour remains enveloped in mystery."

"It shall be my business to clear up the mystery," said Mr. Carew, decisively.

"Heaven grant that you may do so, sir!"

"And now, if you please, Mr. Bullock, I will trouble you for the keys."

"Certainly, sir," said the land-steward, as he arose and went to a desk in a corner of the room, and took from it a heavy bunch of keys, which he brought to the young master of the house.

"You are making a visit of inspection, sir, or possibly you are intending to make some stay among us?" respectfully inquired the land-steward.

"I have come down to look at the place, and may stay some weeks, more or less."

"If you would like to look over my accounts, sir, I will take them down to the house at any time you may choose to name."

"Very well, Mr. Bullock; I will send for you in good

season—as soon as I have leisure to go over the books with you. Good-morning," said Mr. Carew, as he arose, and with the bunch of keys in his hand left the house and re-entered his carriage.

Their way now lay through the deep forest that filled the bottom of the valley and swept around the old hall. At length they emerged from the forest upon the road that ran along the stone wall inclosing the once cultivated but now neglected grounds around the manor house.

Then Musa came in sight of her future home—a massive gray stone building, with a pillared portico in front, and long wings to the right and left, with a gloomy background of tall cedars and rocky precipices.

The carriage drew up at a rusty iron gate, flanked by a porter's lodge, now tenantless.

Cornwallis alighted from his wagon, as nimbly as age and infirmity would permit, and hastened to throw open the gates.

The carriage rolled through, and entered upon a grass-grown and leaf-strewn avenue bordered by evergreen trees, and leading by a semi-circular curve through the lawn and up to the house.

"Where shall we find the old negro who is in charge of the premises, I wonder," said Musa, as the carriage drew up before the pillared portico.

"Bullock told me that his cottage is in the rear of the manor house, near the stables," answered Mr. Carew, as he alighted.

Musa prepared to follow him.

"Welcome home, my dearest love," he said, as he handed her from the carriage and led her up the stone steps to the door.

He selected a key from the heavy bunch in his hand, put it in the lock and turned it. The harsh grating sound with which it worked told a dismal tale of long disuse.

He threw open the wide door and entered the front hall. But the fixed air that met him beyond the threshold sent him hurrying back to stop Musa.

"You must not enter yet, my love. The place is deadly. Sit you here upon the porch until we open the

house and let the sunlight and air in upon it," he said, as he hurried to the carriage, and brought a rug and some cushions back.

He put the rug on the stone floor of the portico, and the cushions on the iron seat, and made her sit down.

Then he beckoned their whole staff of attendants—Cassy, Cornwallis and the two coachmen—to follow him into the house to assist in opening and airing it.

Musa was left alone on the porch, and fell to thinking of her missing child, and praying for its recovery.

While she was so engaged, a shadow came between her and the sunlight. Mindful of the ghostly character of the place, she started with a thrill of awe and looked up.

But this time the shadow had a substance behind it. A gigantic negro stood before her. They gazed at each other for a full minute before either spoke. The negro was the first to break the silence.

"I beg pardon, missy, but dis is mighty funny! Strangers coming into a strange house dis a way. Did Marse Bullock gib leab so to do?"

Instead of answering his question, Musa asked another:

"Are you the person who is in charge of this place?"

"I am, missy, which I would like to be 'formed whedder Marse Land-steward Bullock gib leab for dis intrusion."

"And is your name Pendragon?"

"It is, missy, which I would like to know whedder or no——"

"Then, Pendragon, you had better go into the house and assist the other servants in opening and airing it. Your young master has come home," said Musa, with a benevolent smile, for she truly thought that the home-coming of the young master must necessarily be a very joyful event to the old servant. She was mistaken in this instance. Pendragon stared at her in dismay for a moment, and then sank heavily down upon the ground, and sitting there flat, said slowly:

"Well — de— Lor'-a-messy— on —my— poor — ole — brack—soul."

"Why, what is the matter, my good man?" inquired Musa, in wonder.

"To come right down on top o' me like a tief in de night, or de day o' wrath, or anyfing."

"Pendragon, are you not glad that your master has come?" inquired Musa, in surprise.

The negro shook himself together, and collected his faculties, and forced himself to answer:

"Oh, yes, missy! perfectly oberjoyed and 'elighted to see him. Only de s'prise, missy, and nothin' adequate and conformable to his comin' home. Which I soon 'spected to see de debbil as he, missis. I begs your pardin for sayin' anyfing so unpolite. But I'm offen my head, missis, and dat's de saked trufe, and all along ob de 'light ob habin' him come home, and de mortification ob habin' nuffin' ready for him."

"It was too bad of us to come unexpectedly, Pendragon; but in truth, our resolution to do so was very suddenly formed and acted upon," said Musa, kindly; for mistaking the cause of the negro's disturbance, she really pitied him

"Missy, der's a question I would like to ax yer, which is a deliky question which I don't like to ask, dough dere an't no rale harm nor 'fense into it neider," said Pendragon, scratching his head.

"I think, then, you may certainly ask it," answered Musa.

"Well, den, missis, who is you? Marse Gus C'rew an't got no sister, dat I do know. Dough you's 'nough like his ma to be his sister, too. Who is you, missy, if it an't no 'fense?"

"None at all. I am Mrs. Carew, your master's wife. And before that I was Miss Percie," said Musa, with a tolerant smile.

"Well, Lor'-a-messy— on — my—poor—ole — brack— soul!" again said Pendragon, sitting down flat upon the ground once more.

"What is the matter now, my good man?" inquired Musa, at once amazed and perplexed at the manner of the old negro, whom she began to suspect to be a lunatic.

Instead of answering her question, he asked another:

"Not—not Colonel Reginal' Percie's darter?"

"Yes, Pendragon. I hope you have no objection to me as your young master's wife?" inquired Musa, now laughing outright.

Instead of answering, Pendragon took hold of the wool on his temples with both his hands, and began as before:

"Well—de Lor'-a-messy——"

But his prayer was interrupted by the appearance of Cassy, who, on seeing him, exclaimed, sharply:

"Oh! yer here, are yer? We been lookin' arter yer all ober de place. And a purty mess you keep eberyfing in. Not fit for pigs to come to, let alone ladies and gemen. But I know how it is. Yer great big body, as yer so proud on, an't got nuffin' but a little tiny bit of a soul to tote it about, and it can't do it. That's what's de matter. Now go right in to yer master. He a lookin' for yer. And Miss Musa, honey," she added, turning respectfully to her mistress, "yer can come in now. I hoisted all de windows, and made a roaring fire in your own room."

Musa arose and followed the old nurse, who led her up the broad staircase to a long hall, from which several doors opened into lofty chambers.

"Here, Miss Musa," said the woman, opening a door on the right-hand front—"here is your room, and a fine one it was in its time, and not so bad now."

Musa followed the nurse into a spacious chamber, lighted by four high windows—two on the north and two on the east—which commanded a fine view of the magnificent mountain scenery.

A fine hickory wood fire burned in the old-fashioned open fireplace, and agreeably warmed the room. The floor, of dark oak, was uncarpeted, but supplied with three Turkey rugs, one before the ancient dressing-table, one before the fireplace, and one beside the great old four-post bedstead. The walls were covered with a French paper representing the loves of Cupid and Psyche. The windows and the bedstead were draped with faded crimson moreen. And the chairs and sofas were covered with the same.

Musa drew a chair to the fire and sat down to warm her feet.

"Now, honey, I gwine to send up yer traveling bag and luggage. And if you contrive to 'muse yerself any way, so's to 'scuse me, I want to go and unpack de pervisions we fotch from Eyrie and see about getting some luncheon ready."

"I can excuse you very well, Cassy. But are there no women on the estate that can be called into the house to assist you? You never can get on without two or three assistants."

"Bress you, Miss Musa, there's lots of 'em. There's Cornwallis' two nieces and three granddaughters. He's gone down to de quarters now to see 'bout bringing 'em up here."

"I am glad to hear it."

"But you know, Miss Musa, I'll have to tend to 'em and 'struct 'em till dey gets used to fings."

"Yes, of course, I suppose you will," said the lady.

The old nurse started to leave the room, but suddenly turned about and came back slowly and gravely toward her mistress.

"Miss Musa, honey," she said, stopping and lowering her voice, "does you know what room yer in?"

"No, nurse, no more than that it is my bedroom," answered the lady, lifting her eyebrows.

"Honey, it is de room as you was born in, when you came into dis world, and where your mother died when she went to glory," said the woman, in a low and reverential tone.

"Oh, Cassy!" exclaimed Musa, in a voice of deep emotion, as she looked around upon the scene.

"Yes, honey, and it ain't a bit altered since that time, 'cept things is faded a little. I didn't mention it to you at first, honey, 'cause I hadn't made up my mind whedder to do it or not. But jes as I was a goin' out ob de door it 'peared to me as I must tell you."

"I am glad you told me, Cassy. The thought that this was my poor young mother's room will make it much dearer to me," murmured Musa, in a very tender tone.

"Den I ain't sorry I told you, honey. Now I gwine try to get something good for lunch, and fix things up to look little like Christian people's home."

This was a very busy day for all the new household, not excepting August and Musa.

They had tea at seven o'clock. And after tea the extra servants who had been called in to help were dismissed to their quarters, and the house was shut up for the night.

August, unaccustomed to manual labor, was, as he expressed it, thoroughly worn out by his hard day's work. And as soon as his handsome head was on the pillow he was sound asleep.

But Musa could not compose herself to rest. She closed her eyes, and tried to go to sleep.

Whether she succeeded or not, or how long she lay with closed eyes before the awful interruption came, she never could certainly say.

But after a while she was roused, she knew not by what agency. She opened her eyes, and—horror of horrors!—there, bending over her, glaring at her with fixed eyes, was the most hideous and demoniac shape ever sent forth from the sulphurous fires of Tartarus.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPECTRE.

If I stand here, I saw it!—SHAKESPEARE.

Musa's wild shriek aroused her husband, who started up, exclaiming:

"What is the matter? Musa, Musa!"

But she was shaking as with an ague fit, and could not immediately answer.

"For Heaven's sake, Musa, what is all this?" demanded Mr. Carew, in alarm for her health or sanity.

"Oh, August! August! as I live, I saw it!" she gasped, shuddering.

"Saw what? You are dreaming, love."

"Oh, I saw the thing, whatever it was!"

"It was the nightmare, Musa," he said, soothingly.

"No, no, no! I know what the nightmare is—indigestion, oppression, sluggish circulation of the blood,

attended by bad dreams. This was no nightmare," she panted, trembling.

"What was it, then?"

"Oh, the blackest, the most deformed, the most hideous thing! It bent over me and looked at me with its horrible eyes!" she gasped, shuddering and covering her face with her hands.

"Musa, my darling, compose yourself. This is sheer folly. You have had a bad dream, inspired naturally enough by the ghost stories that you have heard in relation to this old house. Use your excellent sense and compose yourself to sleep again," said August, calmly.

"Oh, no, no, no! this was no dream. It was a hideous thing that stood by me, bent over me, and glared at me with its dreadful eyes. I saw it. Oh, August, get up! Light all the candles, and rouse the servants. I cannot compose myself to sleep to-night until we have searched the house. It may be that something has got in and is roaming about," said Musa, still trembling in voice and limb, as she stepped from her bed and began to draw on her dressing-gown.

"I must do this to satisfy you, my darling, though, indeed, I do not think it necessary upon any other account," said Mr. Carew, with a smile, as he also arose and wrapped himself in his dressing-gown.

The candles that had been left lighted on the chimney-piece had burned out. The great hickory log fire in the fireplace had smoldered down to a mass of dull red and black coals.

August groped about until he found a box of matches, and then he lighted a candle and set it on the mantelpiece.

"Light another! light twenty! oh, this darkness is horrible," exclaimed Musa, nervously.

"I will light all there are here, but there are only two more," answered August, with a smile at what he considered Musa's unreasonable terrors.

"Well, three must do, then. We can leave one here, and you and I can take one each and go and search the house," said Musa.

"Let us begin with this room, then," added August.

And they carefully searched the room, looking under

the bed, under the dressing-table, under the sofa, behind the window curtains, in the wardrobe, and in the closets.

But nothing unusual or suspicious was to be found.

"Let us call up Cassy and Cornwallis, now, and have them help us to search the other parts of the house," said Musa.

"Very well," replied August, with the same sort of a smile that he would have bestowed upon a child whose whims he was humoring.

They were about to leave the room when an unearthly yell rang through the house.

The husband and wife looked at each other in amazement for an instant, and then Musa sank, pale and trembling, into a chair.

"Come, this is something audible, at least," said Mr. Carew.

Musa made no reply, but leaned back with blanched cheeks, half-fainting, on her seat.

"Why, what a little poltroon you are, my love," said August, in a rallying tone.

"I am not afraid of anything whatever in this material world. But I confess that the supernatural fills my soul with terror," murmured Musa, in a low, faint voice.

"Stay you here, then, Musa, while I go and unravel this mystery. I have no doubt I shall soon prove to you that all these supernatural phenomena have a very natural origin," said Mr. Carew, as he snuffed his candle and turned to go.

"No, no, no; don't leave me here! I will go with you!"

"But you are unfit for this business, Musa. If we were to startle a mouse, or a cricket, you would scream or faint, in the present state of your nerves."

"But I cannot stay here alone! I will not!" exclaimed Musa, who was seized with another shaking fit at the bare thought of such a thing.

"Then I will send Cassy to you," said August.

"No! I will go and stay in Cassy's room, if you will not let me go with you. I cannot stay here without," persisted Musa.

"Come along, then, my arbitrary love," replied August.

They left the room, and entered the long central hall, at the back extremity of which was Cassy's little room.

"Do you go in and wake her up, Musa, and I will stay here and keep watch until you do so," said Mr. Carew, when they reached Cassy's door.

Musa turned the knob and entered the room, and laid her hand gently on the form of the old woman.

To her infinite amazement her gentle touch was answered by a terrible cry, while the form under her hand fell to trembling violently.

"Cassy, Cassy," she whispered.

"Oh, not yet! Don't take me yet! I an't 'pared to 'part, 'deed I an't!" screamed the old woman, cowering down in her bed and drawing the bedclothes closely around her head.

"The house is full of bedlamites, is seems to me," said Mr. Carew, as he entered the room, where Musa was standing over the cowering and shuddering form of the old woman, and saying:

"Cassy, rouse yourself! Come to your senses! It is I!"

"Oh, is it you, Miss Musa?" exclaimed the nurse, uncovering her head, and staring at her young mistress.

"Yes, of course. Don't you see that it is!"

"Yes, honey, I see—I see it's you yourself now. But I t'ought you was de debbil come back again. For de debbil's been here arter me to-night, honey. He is indeed, Miss Musa! He is indeed, Marster Augurs!" cried the woman, shuddering and weeping.

"What! Have you seen anything, Cassy?" inquired Musa.

"What frightened you, old woman?" questioned Mr. Carew.

"De debbil, honey! de debbil, marster! Lord! didn't you hear me scream jes' 'fore you come in, Miss Musa? Why, I t'ought people t'other side o' de yeth might a heard me yell out."

"We heard you, but did not know it was you, though that brought us to your room. What did you see, Cassy?"

"De debbil, I keep tellin' ob you, honey—de debbil, sure's you born."

"What did he look like, old woman?" demanded Mr. Carew.

"Oh, Marse Augurs, he look somefin' like—like a great big 'normous turkey-buzzard, and somefin' like a awful large hairy black bull, and somefin' like a sea-sarpint, and somefin' like a evil spirit."

Cassy was directed to get up and dress, and join in a search of the house. Cornwallis was also called, and the four made a thorough exploration of the dwelling.

Into every room on every floor they went, and made a diligent search; but in vain. No one, no sign of any one, except the searching party, was to be seen.

After two hours spent in this investigation, the whole party returned to the supper-hall, from which Musa's chamber opened, and they paused as if to hold a council of war.

"Well, my dear Musa, you see we have made a thorough search of the whole house, and—found nothing more wicked or dangerous than ourselves," said Mr. Carew, with a smile.

"I did not suppose that you would find anything unusual," answered Musa, gravely.

"And now I think we may retire again. We have spent more than two hours in this wild-goose chase, and fatigued ourselves enough, I hope, to insure sound sleep until morning, if we have accomplished nothing else," said Mr. Carew.

And in another half-hour the perturbed family retired to rest, if they could—until morning.

I think that no one slept that night.

Mr. Carew had, from the first alarm, treated the whole affair with ridicule. But he was not quite so much at ease as he seemed to be. If there was nothing supernatural in the events of the night, there was, at least, something very mysterious. And August Carew did not like mystery. He determined that he would, on the next morning, make a more thorough search of the premises by daylight than he had been able to do at midnight, with only the aid of a couple of flaring candles. So he planned, instead of sleeping.

Nor could Musa sleep, though she affected to do so, to avoid disturbing the rest of others. Musa felt sure

that the hideous thing which had stood by her bedside, bent over her and glared at her, was no mere creation of a dream or a nightmare. It was a horrible reality and mystery, the very memory of which banished sleep from her eyelids.

In the morning August made a thorough search of the premises, but could find no trace of the apparition. But he made a surprising discovery, namely, that Pendragon had fled to Richmond, to his mistress, Kate Carew. Such an unaccountable proceeding filled both him and Musa with wonder and vague disquiet. And although he couldn't find the spectre, various members of the household came in contact with it and fled shrieking from its presence. In the course of three days, everybody in the house, except August, had encountered the spectre, and yet he perversely refused to believe in its existence. This skepticism on his part annoyed Musa, and she ardently hoped that August would have a "visitation" that would cure his unbelief.

One day Mr. Carew had gone to Eyrie for letters, and when Musa thought it was time to expect him back she put on her sealskin coat and hood and took her muff and started out to meet him. She walked down the evergreen avenue until she came to the great iron gates and the dilapidated lodge, where she sat down on the stone steps to wait for her husband.

She knew she would not have long to wait, yet she grew impatient, and soon arose and passed through the iron gates, and walked a short distance up the road, in the direction in which he was expected to come, and then turned to look at the house.

The upper windows were all hoisted now and standing open to air the long closed, damp and musty rooms.

While she stood gazing at them now under the full light of day there suddenly appeared at one of them—

Could she believe her own eyes?

The hideous, shapeless thing, whose apparition had appalled her on the first night of her residence at Raven Rocks.

She recognized it with a start and a slight scream. And then she forced herself to gaze upon it calmly and fixedly. It was easy for the most timorous to do so in

broad daylight, and at this safe distance. But it was not so easy to make anything out of the apparition.

A dark, ugly, formless creature, with an ugly, indistinct face. That was all that she could make out, as she gazed steadily upon it for the space of two minutes.

"Oh, how I wish August would come now, so that he could see this thing as I see it," she said to herself, as she kept her eyes fixed, spellbound, on the apparition.

In another moment the sound of approaching horse's hoofs struck on her ear.

She turned and saw her husband galloping down the road toward the gate.

"Oh, I am so glad! Now he will see for himself," she said, as she threw her eyes again up to the haunted window.

The apparition was gone!

"Was there ever anything so provoking? Now August will not see it. And he never will believe in it until he does see it. And as for me, I shall not say another word to him on what he considers a ridiculous subject," said Musa to herself. "Any letters?" she demanded, aloud, as August galloped up and sprang from his horse.

"A half-a-dozen," he answered, gayly, holding up a sheaf. "And there is good news. Come to the porter's lodge and sit down on the steps to read your letter. That will tell you everything."

When they reached the lodge August tied his horse to the gatepost, and then sat down beside his wife on the moss-covered doorsteps of the forsaken lodge.

"Now, then, my dear Musa, here are three letters about the child——"

"But where is she? where is she? When can I have her?" eagerly demanded the young mother.

"I told you there was good news, Musa, and that these letters would give you the details. But I fear, after all, you will be a little disappointed; for, though the child is safe and well by the last accounts, she is probably by this time half way across the Atlantic Ocean," said Mr. Carew, hesitatingly, for he hated to distress his wife.

"Oh, Heaven! half way across the Atlantic Ocean!" groaned the young mother, turning pale.

"But, my dearest Musa, she is safe and well, and in the hands of her devoted nurse, who has taken care of her all her little life, and will take care of her still, since she loved her enough to steal her away and burden herself with her support. And besides, Ferret and Mrs. Wilks have gone after her on the steamer which sailed Wednesday, and which will most probably get into Liverpool before the sailing vessel on which the nurse and child are embarked can possibly do so. But here, read the letters for yourself. The first is from Ferret, the second from Mrs. Wilks, and the third from Wilks himself," said Mr. Carew, as he placed the letters, open, in the hands of his wife.

Musa took them trembling, selected Detective Ferret's letter, and read that first. It was directed to F. A. Carew, Esq., and was as follows:

NEW YORK, Feb. 29, 18—.

F. A. CAREW, ESQ.—*Dear Sir*: I have but a few moments to inform you that I have at last obtained a sure clew to the absconding woman and the stolen child. These are the facts:

That a woman exactly corresponding to the description of the fugitive, and bearing the name of Mary Morris, sailed in the emigrant ship *Fairy*, which sailed from Boston last Saturday, bound for Liverpool. This woman had with her a female child answering exactly to the description of the stolen child and bearing the name of Musette.

Further investigation led to the conclusion that this woman, with the child in her possession, had left Inwood and taken the midnight train for Albany, whence she and the child were traced to Boston and to the ship *Fairy*.

I have only this day finished working up the case to a certainty that justifies me in the course I am now about to pursue. Obeying your instructions to spare no expense for the pursuit of the abductor and the recovery of the child, and availing myself of the ample funds placed in my hands, I have this day secured a passage on the steamship *Darien*, that leaves this port to-morrow morning. I shall take Mrs. Wilks with me, to assist in identifying the woman and child. I confidently expect to reach Liverpool before the *Fairy* can arrive there—in time to overhaul the parties before they have a chance to disembark. So you see, sir, we have them, as it were, in a trap.

I shall take charge of the child and wait for the arrival of the next steamer, by which, of course, you will either write or come.

And now, sir, as I have a good many things to do, I will close, with my best respects to madam and yourself. Your obedient servant,

EDMUND FERRET.

Musa finished this letter, laid it down with a sigh, and

looked with an appealing glance in the face of her husband.

"Yes, love," he said, tenderly answering her silent petition. "Of course we will go over in person. This is Friday, so that we cannot catch the steamer that leaves New York to-morrow morning, but we can easily secure the one that is to sail on next Wednesday. We will go by that."

For all answer she took his hand and pressed it to her heart.

"Now read your other letters, love. They bear upon the same subject," he added.

She took up Mrs. Wilks' letter and opened it.

It was shorter than the first, and read as follows:

INWOOD, Feb. 29, 18—.

MY DEAR MA'AM:—Mr. Ferret says he will write and tell you all the particulars about his finding a sure and certain trace of Mary Morris and little Musette, so I need not tell you about that.

I write to say how good Mr. Wilks has been in consenting to my going over to England with the detective officer to identify the child; and also, to tell you that when I get hold of the child I shall never let it get out of my arms, or out of my sight, until I set it on your lap. And now, dear ma'am, I must close, because I have got to pack up to-night.

With regards to Mr. Carew, I remain, truly yours,

MARGARET WILKS.

"She is a good soul, poor woman," said Musa, as she folded up this letter and laid it with the detective's. "And, by the way, I hope when she gets to Liverpool she will find her son. The ship he ran away to was also bound for that port."

"Yes, I hope she will. And if she should we must bring the boy back with us and try to restore him to his grandfather," answered Mr. Carew.

Musa meanwhile opened Mr. Wilks' letter.

It was addressed to F. Augustus Carew, Esq., and was shorter than either of the others. It was as follows:

ASTERICK HOTEL, New York, March 1, 18—.

MY DEAR SIR:—I have just seen Mrs. Wilks and Detective Ferret off on the *Darien* that sailed for Liverpool this morning. They left very suddenly, in order to reach Liverpool in time to intercept the *Fairy*, on board of which, we have ascertained beyond all doubt, the missing woman and child to be. I inclose

with this two letters, one from each of the pursuers, which they left with me to mail, and which will explain matters more fully. They expect you to write, or to follow by the next steamer. If I can be of any service, pray command me. With much respect to Mrs. Carew, I beg to subscribe myself,

Truly your friend, JEREMIAH WILKS.

"And he is another good soul. I like him better than I did," commented Musa; "and now we will return to the house."

"Yes, dear, for my ride through the frosty air has given me an appetite for luncheon," answered August, walking by her side and leading his horse.

"When shall we leave here for New York, August?" inquired Musa.

"On Monday, if you like."

"Yes, let it be on Monday, that we may secure the Wednesday's steamer for Liverpool," said Musa, eagerly.

And as they walked on they settled the preliminaries of the voyage, so far as they could do it by words alone.

After luncheon that day Musa summoned her old nurse and told her that they were all to leave Raven Rocks for New York on the following Monday.

Cassy was perfectly delighted to hear it, and immediately set about packing up for the journey.

After an early supper the family, being very much fatigued, retired to rest. And the night passed without any sort of disturbance, natural or supernatural.

In the morning Mr. Carew rode to Eyrie to get the mail, but he found nothing for Raven Rocks.

On his return, Bullock, the land-steward, met him by appointment, and spent several hours with him in looking over the accounts of the estate and in receiving his instructions for its management during his absence.

The land-steward departed soon after luncheon. The remainder of the day passed busily, yet quietly. As on the preceding night, the household retired early.

Musa lay awake, thinking of her child, praying for her safety, nearly all that night.

At length toward morning from sheer weariness she fell asleep, and slept deeply until she was strangely awakened by the sound of heavy breathing and moaning close to her side.

She opened her eyes. The room was darker than ever. The shadows were blacker and heavier. The fire on the hearth had smoldered down to a scarcely perceptible deep, red glow. The night-lamp had burned out. The pale light of the winter dawn was gleaming faintly through the crevices of the closed window shutters. But this did not much enlighten the gloomy scene.

And the sound of that heavy breathing, low moaning and muffled movement continued.

In vain she looked around for its cause. She knew that some being was present in the room at that hour, but she could not discover it, amid the heavy black shadows of the place, made heavier and blacker by the contrast of the deep, dull, red glow of the smoldering hickory fire on the hearth.

She thought of calling and waking Mr. Carew, but the dislike of his ridicule, in the event of nothing being found to account for her alarm, prevented her from doing so.

While she lay, with her heart almost ceasing its pulsations, she suddenly, at the same time, felt a stir by her side, a moan, a low cry, and——

Then the voice of her husband, saying:

"Musa, don't be alarmed! I have caught the 'ghost.' I am holding it by both hands. It is flesh and blood. Get up, my dear, and light a candle, and let us 'interview' it."

CHAPTER VII.

"GATHA."

Trembling with excitement and intense curiosity, Musa arose and hurried to the window and threw open the shutters, letting in the light of day upon the dusky room and upon a strange group at the bedside—August Carew sitting up in bed, leaning off and grasping with both hands the talons of a creature that seemed scarcely human, so dark, so ugly, so decrepit it was. It was moaning as in pain and fear, and struggling feebly to get away from its captor.

Musa approached the group and looked closely at the singular figure of the captive.

"It is an old negro woman," exclaimed husband and wife in a breath.

"Who are you?" questioned Mr. Carew, in a gentle tone, for he began to feel some compassion for the miserable wreck of humanity before him.

But the poor creature only moaned in an inarticulate anguish, and struggled piteously to free her hands.

"Musa, dearest, lock the door, and then I will release her. I hate to use any force upon a thing so old and weak as this," said August.

Musa secured the door and returned to the bedside.

August let go the hands of the old creature, who now, no longer held up by his strength, sank, as if dying, upon the floor.

August arose and slipped on his wadded silk dressing-gown.

Musa had already put on hers, and she was now kneeling down on the floor, closely inspecting the drooping form of the miserable being there.

From appearances it was the form of an extremely aged negro woman, black as soot and worn to mere skin and bone. The face was shrunken out of human likeness; the arms looked like long black sticks, the hands like black claws. It was half covered, rather than clothed, in rags that had lost every vestige of their original color and now dangled in dusty and dirty tatters about the skeleton limbs. The ugliness of the shrunken black face was caused more by a look of mingled anguish and idiocy than by wickedness or malignity.

Musa, from the bottom of her heart, pitied this most wretched creature. She kneeled down beside her, took her hand, and tenderly inquired:

"Who are you, my poor woman?"

"Eh?" feebly questioned the woman, rolling her deeply-sunken red eyes restlessly around.

"Darling," said August to his wife, "go and wake Cassy to come and stay with you while I go downstairs and summon Cornwallis. We must find out, if possible, who this poor creature is and where she came from, and we must have her removed from this room."

"She is the same figure that I saw at my bedside on the first night of our arrival, and that I afterward saw in the

open window of the north attic," replied Musa, as she arose from her kneeling position beside the fallen creature, left the room, and passed down the hall and knocked at old Cassy's door.

"Who dar?" burst out in notes of terror from the awakened sleeper.

"It is I, Cassy. Dress yourself quickly and come to my room," answered her mistress. And with a warning to the nurse to make no outcry she returned to her own room, when August said:

"I will go now and call up the men. Some among them will know who this poor creature is." And he went out.

His departure was soon followed by the entrance of Cassy, who hurried in breathlessly.

Mr. Carew soon entered the room, followed by Cornwallis and by the two girls, Seely and Meely.

"Go up to the poor creature, old man, and see if, upon a closer view, you can recognize her," said Mr. Carew.

Cornwallis slowly approached the huddled form, the ragged skeleton, and said:

"Hole up yer head."

The poor old creature raised her woebegone face to the "interviewer."

Cornwallis stared as if he were struck dumb for a minute, and then said slowly:

"Lord a messy on all our souls alibe!—why—why—it's Gatha!"

Mr. and Mrs. Carew drew nearer the speaker. The three negro women stretched their necks to get a closer view, but did not dare to move a step.

"It's Gatha, marster! Gatha as was lost, and we all t'ought was dead! Gatha!" repeated Cornwallis, still staring at the upturned wizened black face.

"Agatha! Good heavens! Where has the poor creature been all this time, and what has reduced her to this pitiable condition?" exclaimed Mr. Carew, with the deepest compassion, as he bent over the poor old black wreck.

"Cornwallis, she must once have known you well. Try to make her recognize you now, and give some account of herself," said Mrs. Carew, dropping tears of pity.

"Gatha! woman! don't you know me—Cornwallis, you

know?" said the old negro, taking hold of her hand, and giving it a rousing shake, as he stared into her face.

She shook her head slowly and sadly.

"Give her a glass of wine," suggested Mr. Carew.

Musa herself ran downstairs and got the wine and hurried back with it. Mr. Carew poured out a small glass full and put it to Gatha's lips. But she snatched it from him with her claw-like hands and drank it eagerly.

Then Musa beckoned the two girls, Seely and Meely, who were her granddaughters by their mother's, as they were the granddaughters of Cornwallis by their father's side.

"Come, children, speak to the old woman. Don't be afraid of her. She is your granny Gatha. See if she remembers you," said Mr. Carew.

The two girls slowly approached, as if they were still uncertain whether the poor old creature were not both uncanny and dangerous.

"Granny Gatha, don't you know me? I am Seely," said the more courageous of the two.

Agatha, stimulated by the wine, looked at her granddaughter with slowly reviving intelligence for a full minute, during which no one else spoke or moved.

Then she put out one black claw and hooked it into the girl's dress and drew her closer, while she muttered:

"Yes, honey; but dis is how it is. Ef I tells, dey will kill me. An' ef I don't tell, I'll lose my mortal soul. Dere! dere's how it is."

"What is she muttering about, Seely?" inquired Mrs. Carew, who had caught only a few words of the sentence.

"Oh, ma'am, she's talking nonsense. She's jes' as crazy as a June bug. 'Tan't no use to pay no 'tention to what she says. I don't b'lieb we'll get any satisfaction out'n her," replied the girl.

"Ask her where she has been all this time. Perhaps she can answer that question," suggested Mrs. Carew.

"Granny Gatha, where you been stayin' all dis time—dis two years and more?" inquired Seely.

"Hush! Up dere. In de cuddy room," muttered the old woman.

"Ask her why she staid up there," said Mrs. Carew.

"What makes you stay up dere in de cuddy room, Granny Gatha?" inquired Seely.

"Hush! Dragon. He put me dere," muttered the old creature.

"There is something more in this than meets the eye and ear," said Mr. Carew.

And now a remarkable change passed over the face of the old crone. As her stimulated brain took cognizance of August Carew's personal appearance, her eyes gleamed with a lurid light of recognition, of surprise, and almost of joy.

"Oh, Marse Percie! Marse Reginald Percie! Is dat you, youse'f? And dey tell me how you was dead and gone. And here you is. And you'll purtect me. Oh, Marse Reginald Percie, I so sorry as ebber I did it."

The old woman spoke with no appearance of mental derangement, but with every symptom of reviving memory and intelligence.

"What are you so sorry for having done, Agatha?" gently asked August.

"Oh, for havin' any hand in de changin' ob de chillun dat dreadful night," whispered the woman, in a frightened tone.

"Musa, my dear, send all the servants from the room," said Mr. Carew, in a low voice.

"Cornwallis, go make up the fire in the parlor. Cassy, take the two girls with you, and go and get breakfast. It is quite time," said Musa.

When Mr. and Mrs. Carew found themselves alone with their strange companion, they shut and locked the door, and then drew near her again.

"What children did you help to change, Agatha?" inquired Mr. Carew, while Mrs. Carew looked on and listened with the deepest interest.

"Oh, Lor'! Oh, oh, oh! Ef I tells, dey will kill me. Ef I don't tell, I'll lose my mortal soul. Ef I do tell, I'll lose my life. I won't tell—not till I know I'm dyin'; den I'll tell, 'cause it won't make no difference. And so I'll save my mortal soul in time. But I an't a dying now!" exclaimed the crone, exultingly.

"But you had best tell now, if you have anything to tell. You have certainly nothing to fear. This lady and

myself are mistress and master of this house, and we will protect you," said August.

"Yes, surely, so you is de marster ob de house, 'cause you rented it, I 'members. But dat lady, she's de mist'ess, is she? She must be de new mist'ess den. I seed her befo'; but I didn't see her good. Le' me see her good."

Here Musa came forward. But the moment old Agatha's revived intelligence took cognizance of her she screamed and covered her face with her hands, and fell to trembling violently.

"What is the matter with you, poor soul? Surely you are not afraid of me? I would not hurt you for the world," said Musa, in a soothing manner.

"Oh, Miss Kate! Miss Kate! Miss Kate! Spare my life; and I won't never tell nothin' till I'm on my dying bed!" cried the crone, in an agony of terror.

"Whom do you take me for? Mrs. Kate Carew? I am like her in person, but I am not she. Why do you fear Mrs. Kate Carew?" inquired Musa.

"You ain't Miss Kate!" exclaimed Agatha.

"No, indeed, I am not," answered Mrs. Carew, smiling at what she considered the fantasies of a lunatic. "I am not Miss Kate. I was Miss Percie. And I am Mrs. Carew, the wife of your young master—Mr. Francis Augustus Carew," said Musa.

"Stop, honey; please 'peat dat ober to me again," said the poor creature, holding her head with both her hands.

Musa, good-humoredly, repeated her statement.

"Oh! and he finks as he is de son ob ole Mr. Peter Carew?"

"Yes, Gatha."

"And you finks as you is de darter ob Marse Reginald Percie?"

"Certainly I do."

"And you's bofe married?"

"Yes."

"Married to one anoder?"

"Yes, yes."

"And you's bofe husband and wife?"

"Why, of course we are."

"And de housen and de lands and de niggers and de money all unite into one wid you two?"

"Assuredly," said Musa, a little impatiently.

"Well, den, I hopes as it's all right. And ef it an't all right, I hopes as it is righter dan she meant w'en she did it," muttered the old creature to herself.

August and Musa looked at each other in questioning dismay; for they knew the story of their nativity, and they connected it with the strange confession, or half-confession, made by Agatha.

"Can you not speak a little more plainly, my poor woman? Tell us what children were changed," demanded August Carew, but in a tone and manner which were as firm as they were kind.

"Oh, Marse Reginald, I so sorry I had any hand into it!" moaned Agatha, again relapsing into imbecility and confusion.

The transitory flash of intelligence had quite passed away and left her as idiotic as ever.

"Dear August, I think we had better send for two of the women from the quarters, and have this poor creature carried to a room and taken care of, and, oh! above all things, washed and dressed and fed. She knows, or believes she knows, something or other, but we cannot get it out of her in her present condition," said Musa.

"I believe you are right, my dear. We only confuse her by our questions," assented August, as he went and touched the bell.

The summons brought Seely to the room. The necessary orders were given, and old Gatha was soon provided for.

While August and Musa were at breakfast, the morning sky became overclouded and a snowstorm came up.

"I am sorry to see this. This will prevent our going to church to-day," said Mr. Carew.

"And I shall lose the only opportunity I shall have for years of attending church in this parish. Well, I can look after my poor waif to-day, at all events. That will be an occupation worthy of the day," said Musa, as they arose from the table, and she rang to have the service cleared away.

But there were other occupations prepared for them.

Old Cornwallis, who answered the bell and received the order, bowed gravely and then announced:

"Pendragon have come back, sir."

"Pendragon come back? Well, he's a free and easy mortal. He comes and goes at his own sweet will. When did he return?" inquired Mr. Carew, in some surprise and curiosity.

"About half a hour ago, sir."

"Where did he come from?"

"From Richmond, sir, which he say he 'rove at Eyrie this morning, by de night coach, and come straight on here."

"Well, and what does he say for himself?"

"He 'sires most respectful to 'port hisself to you, sir, soon as convenient to yourself."

"Very well. Clear away the service, and tell him to come here," said Mr. Carew.

Cornwallis quickly removed the breakfast service, and left the room.

"I suppose he wishes to give some account of himself," said Mr. Carew.

"I have an idea that he can throw some light upon the mystery of the disappearance and long concealment of old Agatha," said Mrs. Carew.

"Perhaps so," admitted her husband.

"And here he comes," added Musa, as she heard a hesitating step and a rap at the door.

"Come in," said August.

And Pendragon entered.

He bowed with the deepest reverence, and crossed the room.

He held in his hands a letter and what seemed to be a packet of manuscript.

"He came up to Mr. Carew, and with still another and deeper obeisance, he presented the letter first.

"Ah! so you have returned, Pendragon. I hope you will be able to account for your sudden and unauthorized departure?" said Mr. Carew.

"Wid submission to you and de madam, sir, I hopes as de letter, my honored missus' letter, will splain all most satisfactory," replied the old man, respectfully.

Mr. Carew took the letter and examined the superscription.

It was directed:

"To Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Carew."

He opened it and read as follows:

"The Shoals, March 2d, 18—.

"My Dear August and Musa: You must not blame Pendragon for anything whatever that he has done. He is my own private and confidential servant, and has acted from first to last under my own absolute orders. I send with this a narrative, which I wish you both to read in private. Your affectionate mother,

"Katherine Shrewsbury Carew."

August passed this note to his wife to read, and then said to Pendragon:

"You may go. We will call you when we want you."

When they were left alone he opened the packet, and read aloud as follows:

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HISTORY OF A MYSTERY.

"I am about to make a confession, which nothing but moral cowardice prevented me from making months ago, and which only the sternest necessity could compel me to make now.

"To do this, I must enter upon a little private family history, of which you know nothing, and in the course of which I must speak of a household tragedy that will deeply grieve and humiliate you both.

"First, then, of myself."

Here followed a sketch of Kate Carew's early life and marriage, with which the reader is familiar. She then continued:

"You all have heard of the catastrophe of the *Golden Shaft,* which foundered off Point Lookout. You know that my father and my husband, who were on the boat *en route* for Washington City, were among the lost.

"Thus by one terrible stroke of misfortune I was orphaned and widowed in one hour. And this blow fell on me only a few weeks before my expected confinement.

"For many days I was prostrated by grief.

"And yet, then, I did not know the full extent of my calamity. I had afterward to learn it.

"As soon as I rallied sufficiently to look into my affairs, I discovered an alarming fact.

"It was that the vast landed estates of my late husband were all strictly entailed upon heirs male, so that if my unborn child should prove to be a girl, the whole estate would go to the heir-at-law, Colonel Harold Carew, of Pirate's Peak, and I and my daughter would be left in comparative poverty—poverty, the bugbear of my life, the only form of perdition I could understand and appreciate.

"This, to me, awful prospect prostrated me again, so that it was many days before I could leave my bed.

"Every one attributed my great sufferings to excessive grief for the loss of my husband and my father, and thought it natural enough, no doubt.

"In the deepest of my sorrow I received a letter from my dear friend, Musadora Percie—a letter full of affection and sympathy, in which she implored me to leave Richmond, so full of associations connected with those dear ones I had so suddenly and awfully lost, and to come to her and be comforted.

"I wrote and thanked her for her sympathy and affection, and accepted her offered hospitality.

"I went down to Raven Rocks, and was warmly welcomed by Musadora, and politely, though I thought rather coolly, received by her husband.

"I soon found out the reason. Colonel Percie was madly in love with his young and beautiful wife, and morbidly jealous, even of her female friends and relatives.

"He wanted all her love, all her thoughts, all her care and all her company to himself.

"I found my fair darling in very delicate health. She was expected to become a mother. Under these circumstances, I should have returned to Richmond, but she would not hear of my going back. She clung to my society in a nervous and trembling way that I could only account for by supposing that she feared to be left alone

in the lonely old manor-house with her beloved but insanely jealous husband.

"If so, she had good reason for her fears, as I soon found out. I had not been at Raven Rocks many days before I heard from Cassy, the confidential maid of Mrs. Percie, that 'Marse Arthur' was coming home.

"Now I must tell you who and what 'Marse Arthur' was.

"In our school days, Musadora had made me the confidante of a pretty little love story.

"It seems that she and Arthur Pentliore were orphan cousins, brought up together in the house of their grand-aunt, Mrs. Letitia Montgomery. But while Musadora was the heiress of much property, poor Arthur was a penniless dependent upon his relations. The two children grew up together like brother and sister, and were never separated until the girl was sent to boarding-school and the boy to the Military Academy at West Point.

"While we were at school together, she would show me the poetical effusions he used to write to her and send from West Point.

"She did not return his love; nor did she even see him again from the time they parted, when he went to West Point, until the time of his fatal visit to Raven Rocks, after her marriage to Reginald Percie.

"Soon after she left school she met Reginald, who admired and wooed her, and soon won her whole heart. They were married after a very short courtship.

"And now 'Marse Arthur' was coming home; not to Raven Rocks, however, which had never been his home, but to Crow Wood, on the other side of Eyrie, which had been the home of his own and of his cousin's childhood, and which was still the residence of that great-aunt, Mrs. Letitia Montgomery, who had brought them up.

"And knowing the antecedents of the young cousins, and the impetuous nature of Arthur, the compassionate heart of Musadora, and the morbid jealousy of Reginald Percie, my soul was filled with forebodings.

"I took the first opportunity of speaking to Musadora on the subject.

"'I hear that Arthur Pentliore is coming back,' I said

"'Oh, yes,' she answered. 'He graduated at the Military Academy last summer, and has been waiting orders somewhere. He is now ordered out to Fort Ute, on the Western frontier somewhere, and is on short leave to come home and bid good-by to his friends before his departure.'

"'How did you hear this, my dear? Surely you do not correspond with him now,' I said, with a feeling of danger.

"'Oh, no, I should not dare. It is more than a year since I heard from him, and more than five years since I have seen him. I think he must have got over his infatuation by this time.'

"'Let us hope so; but does Colonel Percie know anything about this youthful love affair?'

"'Oh, yes,' she said, with a sigh; 'that is what is the matter with him. He found the roll of manuscript verses that Arthur had written me, and that I had preserved, and read them all. And I assure you, Kitty, in one hour my handsome and courtly husband was transformed into a fiend. He tore them all up and stamped upon them, grinding down his heels as if he would have ground them to powder if he could, while his face was livid with rage as the face of a corpse, and his blue eyes blazed like living flames. It was useless for me to tell him that the writer was the playmate of my infancy and childhood, and that I had not seen him since we parted to go to school; and that I never had had any other feeling for him than that of a calm, sisterly affection. Reginald stormed and raved like a maniac. What a horrible thing jealousy is!' she added, with a shudder.

"'It is an insane and devilish passion,' I answered; 'but, oh, my dear, be cautious how you arouse it. Arthur must not come here, nor must you see him.'

"I said this with all the solemnity of a dreadful foreboding, which proved only too prophetic.

"But the pretty little creature to whom I spoke bristled up like an angry little bird, and answered with spirit:

"'My Cousin Arthur shall come here, and I will see him. I adore my husband, but I do not adore his mad jealousy. I am faithful to him in thought as I am in

word and deed, but I will not be treated like a false woman who cannot be trusted.'

"I said not another word. When such gentle doves ruffle up their pretty feathers and erect their crests, they had better be let alone. They are not near so manageable as falcons.

"The very next day Arthur Pentliore came in company with his great-aunt, Mrs. Letitia Montgomery, a stately old lady, whose very presence commanded the sort of respect due to royalty.

"Musadora and myself were alone in the morning room when the carriage was seen approaching the house. In a few minutes the visitors were announced and entered the room.

"The stately old lady whom I mentioned before came in advance. Behind her came Lieutenant Arthur Pentliore, in the splendid uniform of his regiment.

"Musadora had not seen him for five years. I had never seen him at all.

"I examined him now with the deepest interest.

"He was not a handsome man. He was a most beautiful youth. He was not a majestic Apollo. He was a most perfect Adonis. He was of medium height and of slight, though elegant, form. He had regular, classical features, very dark brown complexion, silky, curling black hair and mustache, large, solemn dark eyes, shaded with long black lashes and overarched with heavy black brows.

"As he advanced Musadora met him.

"He took both her hands in his, and fixed his great, grave, dark eyes on hers, with such a look of passion, anguish, and infinite despair as I never saw on any human face before, and as I hope never to see again.

"She turned white and dropped her eyes beneath that gaze.

"And he, without a word, let go her hands and turned away.

"And then, for the first time, I was conscious that Reginald Percie had quietly entered the room and had witnessed this meeting, and had met that look.

"He stood less like a living man than like a marble statue, so still was his form, so livid his face,

"I held my breath for very awe.

"Dora turned pale.

"Neither Arthur Pentliore nor Mrs. Montgomery had caught the expression of Reginald Percie's face, for which chance I thanked fortune.

"Yet there was no outbreak of fury now, as there had been on the discovery of the early love letters.

"This passion was too deep for such display. He completely controlled himself. And after a moment he greeted Mrs. Montgomery, his aunt by marriage, with courtly politeness.

"Yet Dora and I both felt that he was all the more dangerous for his self-control.

" 'This is my brother-cousin, Arthur Pentliore, Colonel Percie,' said Dora, with gentle dignity, though her fair cheek whitened and her sweet voice trembled.

"Arthur bowed low, on thus being presented to his elder, and held out his hand.

"Colonel Percie returned the bow, but ignored the hand.

"And then the eyes of the two men met. And who can say what passed in that momentary mutual glance, between the blazing blue orbs of Percie and the fierce burning black eyes of Pentliore?

" 'Come to your room and lay off your wraps, Aunt Letitia. I have a beautiful room set apart for you; and, of course, as this is the first visit you have made me in my own house, you have come to spend some time,' spoke the soft tones of Dora Percie.

" 'Thanks, my love, no, it is not worth while to take off my bonnet. We did not come to stay,' answered the stately old lady.

" 'Oh, I am so sorry; but if you cannot spend much time, you can at least stay and dine,' pleaded Dora.

" 'I thank you, my child, but I think not. We only came to call on you this morning.' Then, turning to Colonel Percie, she said: 'Arthur has not seen his cousin for the last six years, sir. She was about fourteen years of age then. She is twenty now.'

" 'He finds her much changed, no doubt,' answered Colonel Percie, with forced politeness.

"'He finds her very much grown, at all events,' said Mrs. Montgomery, with stately good humor.

"'And he finds her very much improved, where there seemed no possible room for improvement,' I added.

"Dora, smiling, blushing, and utterly embarrassed, looked from one to the other of us, her seeming flatterers, until her eyes rested on the beautiful, dark, eloquent face of her cousin, when she said:

"'They are all speaking for you, Arthur. What do you say for yourself?'

"'The rosebud has become the rose,' murmured the young poet, with a look more eloquent than the words.

"Colonel Percie pulled the bell so suddenly and sharply that a servant appeared as if he had been jerked into the room.

"'Mrs. Percie, you have forgotten that our guests have had a long ride. Had you not better order some refreshments for them?' he then brusquely demanded of his wife.

"'My housekeeper understands her duties, Colonel Percie,' answered the lady, in a low voice. Then, turning to the waiting servant, she said:

"'Will you inquire if lunch is ready?'

"'Lunch is on the table, madam,' answered the man.

"'Go on, then. Come, Aunt Letitia. Reginald, give Aunt Letitia your arm, if you please. Arthur, take Mrs. Carew to the table,' said the young hostess, waiting until she saw her guests pass on in the order she had named, and then following them.

"We gathered around a table, on which were served some very choice delicacies. Mrs. Montgomery, myself, and even Dora, did full justice to the danities set before us. But Arthur Pentliore ate little. And Colonel Percie excused himself on the ground of not feeling well, and he neither ate nor drank. He was evidently determined neither to break bread nor drink wine with his wife's cousin.

"When lunch was over we went back to the drawing-room, where Arthur Pentliore, in answer to the questions put to him by Dora, told us that he had but a month's leave of absence, at the end of which he was to go out to Fort Ute, on the Oregon River, which was to be his post

of military duty for an indefinite number of years to come.

"'And I say that a young man had better be dead than to be buried alive out there. I want Arthur to resign his commission and to stay at home with me and look after the estate that may one day be his own, if he pleases me in this matter; but the long and short of it is, he has determined to go, even at the risk of being left out of my will,' said the old lady.

"And then they rose to take leave.

"'I hope that you and Mrs. Carew and Colonel Percie will come and dine with us to-morrow. Can you do so?' inquired Mrs. Montgomery, as she embraced her niece in bidding her good-by.

"'I—do not know. I fear, not to-morrow,' answered Dora, hesitatingly.

"'Well, then, my love, fix upon some early day—the earlier the better, only suit yourself in coming, and come and bring your friend,' answered Mrs. Montgomery, as she kissed and released her niece.

"Arthur Pentliore shook hands with his cousin, fixing his eyes upon hers with the same involuntary look of infinite sorrow, tenderness and despair, as he let go her hand.

"They were gone.

"But their carriage wheels had scarcely rolled away, and the sound of them had scarcely died on the graveled avenue, when Colonel Percie strode up to his wife and stood before her.

"He utterly forgot or disregarded my presence, and spoke to her as if they had been alone.

"His face was as livid as it had been before; his teeth were set, and his blue eyes gleamed like blue steel stiletto-es, as he said, in a low, hard, stern tone:

"'I have restrained myself with the greatest difficulty during the last two hours, and only out of respect for Mrs. Montgomery, and in consideration that she and her nephew stood under my roof, sacred in their characters of guests. But now that they have gone, I tell you, Dora, that you must never meet Pentliore again. He must never cross my threshold again, nor must you enter your aunt's house during the residence of Pentliore in

this neighborhood. No man ever looked at a woman as he looked at you, unless he loved her with unholy passion, and—believed, at least, that his sinful love was returned.'

"While he spoke, she gazed on him in utter dismay at the depth of degradation to which his insane jealousy had descended.

"When he ceased speaking, she found her voice, and, in accents of acute distress, wailed forth:

"'Reginald! Oh, Reginald! How can you dishonor yourself so?'

"But without answering her again, he turned on his heel and stalked from the room.

"She threw herself down on the nearest sofa, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"I went and knelt down beside her, and put my arms around her in silence.

"'And even you heard it!' she wept aloud. 'You heard my husband fling that insult in my face! Oh, that I could have received it and lived on!'

"'My darling, don't grieve so bitterly,' I said. 'It is but the very excess of your husband's love for you that inspires his insane jealousy. Do not grieve that he loves you so excessively.'

"'Love me! How can he love me, if he does not honor me? Or how can he honor me, if he believes such things of me?' she cried, passionately, breaking into fresh sobs and tears.

"'My child, he did not accuse you, he only accused your cousin of being in love with you; for which I do not blame him. I blame Pentliore; he had no right to look at you in the way he did,' I said.

"'To look at me in the way he did!' she echoed. 'Poor, dear boy! that was his poetry! Goodness knows, I have seen him look at the moon so, and at the stars!' added Dora, almost inclined, in her April-like temperament, to turn from weeping to smiling.

"'He may look at the moon and stars as often and as long and as spoonily as he pleases; but he must not look at you so. You are not moon and stars; you are a beautiful young wife with a jealous husband. There, dry your eyes and thank your fortune for a handsome man's

devoted love; Colonel Percie is a handsome man with all his ugliness,' I said.

"And with this paradox as a parting fling, I left the room, hoping that Reginald Percie, after his burst of temper, would return to her side and console her better than I had succeeded in doing.

"I did not meet this uncomfortable pair again until dinner, when they appeared to be reconciled.

"But some evil genius seemed to preside over the destiny of this unhappy household.

"The next day, in compliance with her husband's will, Dora wrote to her Aunt Montgomery, declining an invitation to dinner upon the plea of indisposition. She sent the note by a groom, who returned with an answer, expressive of Mrs. Montgomery's regret.

"Two days passed, during which we saw no more of the people from Crow Wood. But the evening of the third day we had a surprise.

"Dora and myself, with our shawls wrapped around us, were sitting out on the front piazza, when Arthur Pentliore rode up, leaped from his saddle, threw the reins to his groom and ran up the steps.

" 'Good-evening, my fair cousin,' he said; "good-evening, Mrs. Carew. It is a lovely evening! I came over with a message from Aunt Montgomery, inquiring about Dora's health. I hope you are not going to be ill?' he added, his tone deepening to one of grave tenderness as he turned to his cousin.

" 'Oh, no, I am only a little indisposed; only not quite able to take a long mountain ride,' she answered, cheerfully.

" 'I am very glad to hear that it is nothing more serious,' said Arthur.

"And, without waiting for an invitation to do so, he took a seat.

" 'I hope Mrs. Montgomery is quite well,' I said, after a while, just by way of saying something to break the awkward silence.

" 'Oh, quite well, I thank you,' he answered.

"Then he took up a guitar, upon which I had been playing previous to his arrival, and had dropped down by my side as he had come up the steps.

"'Do you play, lieutenant?' I inquired.

"'Yes, madam,' he answered, dreamily, as he proceeded to tune the instrument.

"'Will you favor us, then?' I requested, dreading the arrival of Colonel Percie, and thinking that it was better he should be found playing to us both than talking to Dora.

"He bowed acquiescence to my request, played a short prelude, and then began singing, 'Roll on, Silver Moon.'

"He had a very fine tenor voice, clear, rich and full. He sang so well that I forgot my anxiety in the delight of hearing him.

"Then he sang 'Beautiful Star,' and when he reached the refrain, 'Thou art so near and yet so far! his pathetic voice trembled with a pleading tenderness that brought the tears even to my worldly eyes. I glanced at Dora. She was weeping softly. He finished his song amid a breathless silence, that continued until he gently dispelled it, as he arose and stood before us, murmuring:

"'I must say good-night.'

"So saying, he raised the guitar again, tuned it anew, and swept his fingers across its chords, awakening a low, deep sob, that soon broke into a wild, thrilling wail, from which his own voice arose, first soft, tremulous, as from a sea of tears, then swelling, throbbing into a weird, despairing cry, that seemed the utterance of a soul's renunciation, as he sang:

"'Go, forget me!—Why should sorrow
O'er that brow a shadow fling?
Go, forget me!—And to-morrow
Brightly smile and sweetly sing;
Smile, though I should not be near thee,
Sing, though I should never hear thee.'

"Silently he laid down the instrument. Silently he passed away in the moonlight, and a moment after Colonel Percie galloped up to the house, threw himself from his horse, flung the reins to his groom, and ran up the stairs, demanding, impetuously:

"'What man was that I heard playing a guitar and singing a love song, as I rode into the lawn?'

"No one answered him.

"'Was it not Pentliore?' fiercely demanded Reginald Percie.

"'Yes, it was Arthur,' replied Dora, driven at length to the wall, and trembling excessively, both in voice and frame.

"'Arthur!' echoed Colonel Percie, in a tone of intense scorn and hatred. 'Arthur! I forbid you, madam, to call him by so intimate a name. And I require you to explain how he dared to present himself here, and how you ventured to receive him, after my positive orders to the contrary.'

"She was on the very brink of an hysterical outbreak, but she constrained herself to reply, with gentle dignity:

"'Lieutenant Pentliore knew nothing of your prohibition, Colonel Percie. Nor could I bring myself to tell him of it. I am not on such confidential terms with my cousin as would enable me to tell him that my husband cannot trust us, and that he—my cousin—had better keep away. No, Colonel Percie; if you wish to banish my cousin from the house, you will have to do it. For I cannot, and—I will not.'

"There was silence for a few moments, during which Reginald Percie's face looked perfectly ghastly in the moonlight, partly, I suppose, because he was stung by the words of his wife, as well as maddened by his own extravagant jealousy.

"At length he spoke, but in a voice quite unlike his own, even in his worst rages:

"'Then, by all the demons in and out of Tartarus! he shall learn from me that when he next crosses my threshold he takes his life in his hands!'

"And so saying, he strode into the house, leaving us there.

"Dora turned and threw herself upon my bosom, in that passion of shame and sorrow that she could no longer control.

"I knew not what to say to her, so I said nothing; but I kissed and caressed her in silence.

"'Oh, if my mother lived! Oh, if my mother only lived! She could tell me what to do!' said Dora, with a burst of sobs and tears.

"'If I tell you what to do, will you do it, love?' I inquired.

"'Yes, yes!' she answered, desperately, 'for I am driven to the verge of frenzy by all this!'

"'Be patient for a little while, darling. Remember that the first week of Arthur's leave has already passed, and there are but three weeks left, and then he must go.'

"'Ah! but in this first week Reginald has almost driven me crazy with his causeless jealousy. And in the next three he will kill me, or himself, or some one else!' she cried.

"And, oh, how awfully, how prophetically, she spoke!

"I did not think so then. I answered, soothingly:

"'Not if you will do as I advise you, dear Dora. Will you do so?'

"'Yes, yes! I told you I would.'

"'Well, then, write a short note to your cousin, kindly requesting him not to come here again, and send that note off early to-morrow morning.'

"'What! without giving him any explanation of my strange request?' she inquired, raising her brows.

"'Certainly—without giving him any explanation.'

"'What will he think?'

"'It does not matter, comparatively speaking, what he thinks. But most probably his intuitions will guide him to a true solution of the problem.'

"'Never! My poor, simple-hearted boy-poet! He will never imagine that the man I gave myself to could ever be jealous of the boy I refused. But I will do as you counsel me, Kate. And now I think we will go to bed——

"'To bed—perhaps to sleep!'

"Very early the next morning I arose from a sleepless pillow, dressed myself and went downstairs, where I found Dora Percie already at her writing-desk in the library, and in the act of sealing up a note, for which a groom waited at the door.

"'Good-morning, dear,' she said, as she arose and kissed me. 'You see I can take advice.'

"'I am glad for your sake, sweet Dora,' I said, or something like it.

"She turned to the groom and gave him the note, saying:

"'Ride as quickly as you can to Crow Wood, so as to get there if possible and hand this to Mr. Pentliore before he goes out.'

"The boy touched his forelock by way of 'reverence,' and went out.

"And in a few minutes we heard him galloping off.

"Several days passed, and we saw no more of Arthur Pentliore, until, one fatal night, when our household was wrecked and the powers of evil triumphed!

CHAPTER IX.

ONE FATAL NIGHT.

"The days that followed were full of the dark and gloomy calm that precedes the fell, destructive storm!

"Dora Percie pined herself ill with an intense fear that took the form of foreboding. Colonel Percie misinterpreted her illness. In his jealous madness, he convinced himself that she was grieving after her absent lover. He brooded over this impression until he became a morose monomaniac on the subject. He grew moody, sullen and snappish as a maddog.

"Events went on in this way for nearly two weeks, and the month of Arthur's leave was drawing very near its close, when we might hope to breathe freely again.

"About this time, our monomaniac seemed determined to try an experiment and test the truth of his jealous suspicions.

"So, one evening, he told his wife that on the next morning he should start for Richmond on business, and should be absent for a week. And the same night he ordered his servant to pack his valise and to be ready to wait on him.

"Very early the next morning, attended by his valet, he set out for Eyrie, to take the morning stagecoach for the city. He rode in the close carriage, and his valet

rode on the box-seat with the coachman. When the coachman brought the carriage back, he reported that his master had reached Eyrie in time to intercept the early coach, and that he had set out for Richmond.

"That night Dora and I slept together for company. And we talked nearly all night. We speculated about our future children. And we promised each other that if one child should be a boy and the other a girl, they should marry. I was then looking every day for the arrival of my child. Dora expected to see hers in about two weeks. At that time the great subject of my anxiety was that my child should be a boy; for on the chance of its being a boy hung all my hopes of earthly prosperity; a boy would bring me wealth, a girl only poverty. And as our talk had reawakened and intensified all my anxiety, I could not compose myself to rest, even after Dora had talked herself to sleep.

"The next morning I was very weary.

"But Dora seemed stronger, fresher and brighter than she had been for the last two weeks. We breakfasted at our usual hour.

"The morning was so fine that I proposed to Dora that we should take a ride, adding that we had not been out so long, and that we greatly needed the fresh air.

"'Oh, no, no, no!' said the poor child, eagerly, 'I will not leave the house until after Arthur has left the neighborhood. I would not meet him again, I would not even run the least risk of meeting him again, especially in my husband's absence—no! not for the preservation of my own life, if that were necessary.'

"I saw that she was right, and ceased to urge the point.

"'But you might go, Kate. There is no earthly reason why you should not go. Let me ring and order the carriage for you,' she added, kindly.

"'No, indeed, I do not care to go without you,' I replied.

"And though she still urged me to take an airing, I continued firm in my resolution to stay home and keep her company.

"I felt very weary all that day. I ascribed my weariness to the effects of the sleepless night I had passed.

"And so after luncheon I left Dora Percie lounging in an easy-chair and reading a new book, and I went to my own room and lay down, and soon fell asleep.

"I slept for several hours. When I awoke, the short winter afternoon was almost over. The sun was sinking to his setting.

"I saw that it was time to dress for dinner, so I started up and rang for my maid Agatha, an elderly woman, who had been my nurse and was now my sole attendant.

"But before my summons could be answered, a feeling of illness came over me and compelled me to sit down.

"When Agatha entered the room, I told her to lay out my dress and help me to get ready for dinner.

"But she looked in my face and smiled, and said:

"'I finks if I was you, young mistress, 'stead o' dressin' up for dinner, I jes' ondress and lay down ag'in.'

"'Why should I, Agatha?' I inquired.

"''Cause' honey, I finks you looks proper bad, and you'll be worse afore you'se better, and dere'll be a derival in de famberly before many hours,' was her encouraging reply.

"I followed the woman's advice, because I knew that she was a very experienced nurse, and also because I was compelled by fast increasing illness to do so.

"'Agatha, you can attend to me yourself, I hope?' I inquired.

"'Who, me? Well, I reckon I ought to, honey! I nussed enough ladies in my time.'

"'Very well, then. Make no noise. Do not alarm any one. I do not wish to have Mrs. Percie agitated in her present delicate condition. Do not let her know anything about my illness until all is safely over,' I said.

"'Hi, honey, who you teachin'? your grandmammy? I got a headpiece on my shoulders, I is. What call I got to make any fuss 'bout sich a simple, nateral event as a derival in de famberly? You tell me where to find everyfing I want afore you gets any wuss and leabe de res' to me. Dere now.'

"I gave the nurse my instructions, where to get every article that she asked for.

"Sometimes she had to leave the room, but she always

locked the door after her, to prevent the intrusion of anybody during her absence.

"And sometimes she had to ring for one of the housemaids to bring her something from the kitchen, but then she always 'interviewed' the assistant in the hall outside the chamber door.

"All these precautions were taken to prevent Dora Percie from being disturbed.

"Meantime it grew dark and Agatha had to light the chamber lamps.

"In the midst of my trouble I wondered why nobody came to call me to dinner, for certainly the dinner hour had come and gone.

"In an interval of suffering, I inquired of Agatha:

"'Has no one been up here to call me down to dinner?'

"'No, honey.'

"'Then they must know that I am sick. And Mrs. Percie will find it out, and agitate herself,' I said.

"'No, honey, dey don't. Nobody but Marty has been anigh de room, and she don't know nuffin' but what I tell her, and I tell her as how you got a burning headache, and want hot water to bave your feet. Dat what she finks, and I tell her not to let on to anybody, fear it will come to Mrs. Percie's ears, and 'sturb her mine,' the old woman explained.

"'Quite right, Agatha. Still, it is very strange Dora has not sent for me to come to dinner,' I said.

"And this subject of speculation divided my mind with that other question, whether my expected child would be a girl or a boy, until I became too ill to care for anything 'in the heavens above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth.'

"The sun had long set. And

> "'The first watch of the night was kept
> By the red planet Mars—'

when my long-looked-for child arrived.

"'As purty a little gal as ebber you did clap yer two looking eyes on, young mist'ess,' said the nurse, as she laid the little creature beside me.

"Yes; it was a girl. Yes, Musa Percie, it was yourself.

Musa Percie you are by marriage, but not by birth! Musa Carew you were by birth, born to poverty, not to wealth!

"I had no heart to welcome the little girl whose birth took away all my wealth, and gave me only poverty instead.

"I looked at her and kissed her sadly, without any of a young mother's rapture—almost without any of a mother's affection.

"'Now, honey, as all is over so safe and nice, and everyfing in order, mayn't I jes' go and tell Miss Dora? And Lor'! won't she be s'prised, just? Mayn't I go now and tell her, honey?' pleaded the old woman, burning with all a gossip's desire to run and tell such news.

"'Yes, Gatha, go and tell Mrs. Percie—— But stop! stop! we'll do better than that. We'll put a better surprise on her than that. Go, and don't hint a word of what has happened yet to any living soul; but ask Mrs. Percie please to come up here and see me. And then when she comes we will show her the baby and see how she looks,' I said.

"For, notwithstanding my disappointment, I felt that I could somewhat enjoy Dora's surprise.

"My old nurse, chuckling to herself with gleeful anticipation of fun, went out and locked the door on the outside and took the key with her to prevent any intruder coming in and making a premature discovery during her absence.

"I lay there, very down-hearted on account of my girl, yet looking forward with some satisfaction to the entrance of Dora Percie.

"In about ten minutes Agatha re-entered the room alone.

"'Is Mrs. Percie coming directly?' I inquired.

"'Honey, when I 'quired for Miss Dora, dey tell me as Miss Dora go out jes' as dinner was gwine on de table, and an't been in since—— Now don't you go startin' up in bed and starin' in dat way, honey! You'll do yourself a mischief!"

"The old woman added this piece of advice to her communication, when she saw the effect of that communication upon me.

"'Dora Percie went out just before dinner—that must have been at dusk—and has not been in since. That accounts for no one coming to call me to dinner. But how very strange! and how late it must be! What o'clock is it now, Agatha?'

"'Honey, it's nigh ten o'clock. And by de same token, you mustn't 'cite yerself any more one bit 'bout Miss Dora. She an't gone offen de plantashun no how, 'cause she walked. And she big 'nough to take care o' herse'f. Now you's jes got to hab some nice tea and toase, and den go to sleep. Now I gwine down to get your tea and toase. And you lay dere good and quiet till I come back,' said Agatha, as she got up to leave the room.

"Soon my nurse brought me my light refreshment, of which I partook to her great satisfaction. Finding me still wakeful and excitable, she gave me an opiate. It was malpractice, no doubt, but it was the practice at that day, especially among old nurses. And on that particular occasion I think it happened to do good. But for that opiate, which if it did not give me sleep, at least dulled all my sensibilities, I never could have lived through the night of horror that followed.

"And now, I must say, that for the knowledge of the events of that night, outside my own chamber, I am indebted to hearsay alone.

"Dora had been summoned to the bedside of a dying old woman, a slave who lived in an open space beyond a belt of woods across the lawn. The woman's husband, old 'Sias, had come for her, and she had gone with him, without notifying any of her household. The sick woman was dying when Dora arrived at the cabin, and passed away with Dora's hand clasped in hers.

"Dora arose gravely from her seat, kissed the calm dark face, closed the eyes, drew the white sheet up over the head, and then signed to the negro woman to come and take her place.

"As with reverent manner they approached the death-bed, Dora whispered:

"'Send up to the house for anything that is needed. I am going there now."

"Then she looked for 'Sias, to see if perhaps he was

able to attend her back. But the poor old bereaved husband was kneeling at the foot of the bed, sobbing as if his heart would break. So Dora glided softly out of the cottage, wrapped her shawl closely around her, and took her way to the house.

"She was not afraid. There really seemed to be no cause for fear. She crossed the narrow belt of woods and entered upon the front lawn, from which she could see the face of her house, lighted up here and there by the evening lamps shining through the crimson curtains of the windows whose shutters were not yet closed.

"As she was crossing the lawn, however, she heard the clatter of horse's hoofs coming from the direction of the house down the evergreen avenue.

"While she was still wondering who the horseman could be, he came into full view, and seemed to recognize her at the same instant that she identified him. He was Arthur Pentliore.

"She had scarcely ascertained this alarming fact before he turned out of the evergreen avenue and cantered briskly across the lawn in her direction. She stood surprised, amazed, transfixed, unable to fly.

"As he drew near he leaped from his horse, and, leading him by the bridle, walked up to her side, holding out his free hand and saying, in his grave, sweet way:

"'Cousin Dora, I am so glad to meet you. I have been up to the house to see you; but they told me that you were not at home, and they could not tell me where you were. And—may Heaven forgive me for the ill thought, Dora; but—I coupled this asserted absence of yours with the part of the strange note you sent to me, and I imagined that you were in all the time, and had only given orders to be denied to me. So I mounted my horse and set out for home, feeling very bitterly sad; for, Dora, I had only come to say good-by. I am going away to-morrow. But before I say good-by, cousin, I must ask you to forgive me for the injustice I did you in my thought. I should have known that you were incapable of such an act. And I must also entreat you, dear Dora, to tell me in what manner I have been so unhappy as to offend you, that you should write to me

such a strange, cruel note as I received from you, my sister-cousin?'

"As he spoke he took both her hands in his own and held them fast, while he looked in her face with that sad, wistful gaze that seemed at once a history of woe, a prophecy of ruin, and an appeal for sympathy.

"But she pulled her hands from him with sudden violence and terror, breathlessly exclaiming:

"'You have done no wrong at all! You have not offended me in the least. But oh! go! go! go! Every instant that you stay here is fraught with deadly peril to yourself and others.'

"And as she spoke, she gazed around upon the lonely night scene in the park, as if she half expected to see some murderous enemy start from behind a bush or tree —though she at that moment believed that her husband, who, in his jealous fury, had threatened her cousin's life, was a hundred miles away.

"'Oh, go! go! In mercy to yourself and me, leave this place!'

"And with these words, she sprang from his side and ran on toward the house.

"He gazed at her in utter amazement for an instant, and then sped after her, and overtook her, and caught and held her hand, as he exclaimed:

"'Dora, for Heaven's sake what is the meaning of this? I swear that I will not leave you till you tell me! If my presence does not offend you, whom does it offend? Tell me that, and I will go.'

"'Colonel Percie!' she answered, desperately. And then she bowed her head and felt as if she should die of shame at the admission that her husband could be jealous of her.

"'Good Heaven!' slowly murmured Arthur Pentliore. 'Can that be possible? Then, indeed, for mine own honor as well as yours, I must say good-by. Good-by, Dora—sweet cousin, good-by! And may you be very happy!'

"And as he spoke, he raised her hand to his lips, dropped it, and turned away.

"'Stand, villain!' suddenly cried a stern voice near. And Reginald Percie strode out from a group of alder

bushes and stood before him, with a revolver leveled within three feet of his heart.

"Dora Percie shrieked, dropped upon her knees, and held up her hands in agonized, speechless deprecation.

"Arthur Pentliore stood still, confronting his deadly enemy.

" 'Colonel Percie,' he said, 'how dare you use opprobious language to me? How dare you bar my path and threaten my life? Lower your weapon, sir, and let me pass.'

" 'Budge one step, and you are a dead man!' cried Colonel Percie.

" 'Oh, Reginald! Reginald! Mercy! Mercy!' shrieked Dora, clasping her hands.

"Silence, traitress! I told you what I would do if I ever should catch this scoundrel in your company again. I have caught him now. I knew I should catch him, if I only watched and waited long enough! I have caught him now! Caught him in the dead of night alone with you in the park! And he shall take the consequences of his and your act.'

" 'Sir!' sternly interrupted Arthur Pentliore, 'you shall not so belie my cousin in my presence. This meeting was accidental on her part. I came here only to bid her good-by. She did not expect me.'

" 'You lie!' coarsely retorted Reginald Percie, forgetting every gentlemanly instinct of his nature.

" 'Colonel Percie!' exclaimed Arthur Pentliore, with flashing eyes.

" 'Oh, Heaven help me! Oh, Reginald! Reginald!' wildly pleaded Dora, holding up her hands.

" 'Be silent, I command you, traitress!' roared the infuriated man.

"Then, turning to his fancied rival, he hissed:

" 'I say you lie, you villain, when you call this meeting an accidental one! What! an accidental meeting between my wife and yourself in the park, at dead of night? Faugh! It was a preconcerted meeting. Preconcerted, because she thought that I was away at Richmond. I am here. I told her if ever I caught you by her side again, I would kill you before her eyes. And by all the fiends in flames! I will do it! Thief! coward! miscreant!

die in your wickedness!' leveling his pistol straight at the heart of his supposed rival.

"'Reginald! Oh, Heaven!' shrieked Dora Percie, starting forward.

"But there was a flash of fire, a sharp report, and the body of Arthur Pentliore leaped into the air and fell forward in a heap, face downward—dead!

"An hour after this, Marty, one of the colored women in whose charge Mrs. Percie had left the remains of poor Henny, was crossing the park, on her way from the negro quarters to the house, for the purpose of procuring some necessaries for the occasion, when she came upon what she first, in affright, believed to be two dead bodies, lying in the snow, near the group of alder bushes.

"Without daring to go near enough to identify them, she turned and fled back to the quarters and gave the alarm.

"And soon a half dozen negro men, with lanterns, gathered to go to the fatal spot.

"They were followed a short distance behind by at least twice that number of frightened but intensely curious women.

"The men drew near the group, stooped and lowered their lanterns to examine the bodies.

"'Good Lord!' exclaimed one, in accents of horror. 'It is Marse Arthur Pentliore, in a puddle of blood!'

"'Oh! oh! oh!' cried another, with sudden grief and terror. 'It's our mistess! our mistess murdered here!'

"And all the negro men and women crowded around the group, with exclamations, groans and cries of grief, fear, horror and unspeakable amazement.

"And then they began hurriedly to speak of moving the bodies up to the house. And some of the men were dispatched to the quarters to bring doors.

"And they went quickly on their errand, spreading consternation as they passed among the negroes who had not yet heard of the catastrophe.

"They soon returned, bringing two doors, which they laid upon the ground near the bodies.

"The men tenderly raised the corpse of Arthur Pentliore and carefully laid it out upon one of the doors.

"The women reverentially approached the form of

their mistress, but when they began to touch it they found that she still breathed.

"'She's alibe! Oh, thanks be to goodness, she's alibe!" exclaimed Martha, the woman who first made the discovery.

"'Run, Martin! Run fast as you kin to the quarters and fetch a mattress and some clean blankets. We mustn't lay her on no door,' she added.

"The man ran as fast as his limbs could carry him, and soon came back with a mattress and a pile of blankets on his head.

"The mattress was prepared, and the form of the poor insensible young wife was laid upon it and carefully covered over with the blankets.

"One man was sent on before to warn the housekeeper at Raven Rocks of what was approaching.

"And four men raised the mattress, with its sorrowful lading, by the four corners, and carried it slowly toward the house.

"Finally two men, bearing the door with the dead body of Arthur Pentliore, brought up the rear. And so the mournful procession moved on.

"No words can convey any adequate idea of the consternation and horror that seized the household when the insensible form of their beloved young mistress and the gory corpse of Arthur Pentliore were brought into the hall.

"I did not learn the awful facts for some hours afterward. They were very carefully and quite properly kept from me.

"The corpse of Arthur Pentliore was laid out on a bed in a spare room, to remain there until the authorities of Eyrie could be notified of what had happened.

"The revolver and an odd glove that had been picked up near the scene of the murder were also laid with the body.

"Dora Percie was taken to her own chamber, undressed and put to bed. And my Agatha, as an experienced nurse, was called to attend her, while waiting the arrival of the physician who had been sent for.

"Dora Percie recovered from her deadly swoon; but she never recovered her reason. That had fled forever!

"In the course of that night she gave birth to a son, born some weeks before his natural time. The doctor had not arrived. My Agatha was her sole attendant, as she had been mine. And with this opportunity came to me the overpowering temptation to commit that act, whose memory, in the midst of all my splendor, has filled my life with gloom. And this was the way in which it happened.

"I told you that my nurse, finding early in the evening that I was restless and sleepless, gave me a dose of opium to quiet my nervous system.

"And so while all the horrors of that most horrible night were being enacted in the park and in the house, I lay in my quiet chamber, not sleeping indeed, nor needing sleep, but with every nerve at rest, in a state of heavenly calm.

"It was about midnight that my nurse entered the room, to see how I was getting on. Finding me awake and perfectly calm, she ventured to break the lightest part of her news in this way:

" 'Don't reckon as you'll see Miss Dora to-night, honey.'

" 'Why?' I inquired, serenely, feeling very indifferent upon that and every other subject.

" 'Well, yer see, honey, she's sick. And I do suppose as dere will be anodder derival in de fambly 'fore morning.'

" 'Is that so?' I inquired, with perhaps a trifle more interest than I had felt before.

" 'Yes, honey, and not a soul to tend to her, 'cept it's only me. Boy sent arter de doctor to Eyrie airly in de ebenin' come back, and say how he can't find him. Nobody to tend to de madam but only me. Cassy she down bad as she kin wid a raging toothache. An't no good to nobody. Nobody to tend to de madam but me. I dunno what in de name of de Lor' she'd a done ef I hadn't happen to be here 'long o' you.'

"Agatha did not drop a hint of the awful tragedy in the park, or of the consequent insanity and dangerous condition of Dora Percie. She said nothing that was likely to disturb me. But my interest in her news was increasing.

"'Gatha,' I said, 'you have not told any one yet of my baby?'

"'No, mistess. 'Deed eberybody so took up 'long ob—— No, mistess; I an't told nobody.'

"'Then don't tell them a word about it just yet. And don't tell any one about Dora's baby until you come and tell me first. Do you hear?'

"'Yes, mistess. And now, honey, seein' as you is so well, I go 'tend to my oder patient.' And she went away. An hour after, Agatha came to my room, bringing a little white bundle of wailing life in her hands.

"'Here, mistess, for de love ob de Lor', take dis little fing and put it to yer breas', and take care ob it. Its mother can't.'

"'How is Dora?' I inquired first.

"'Well, she's—she's—she's not able to take care ob de baby yet, honey. Not like you, you know. Facts is, she don't even know as she's got any baby,' replied the old woman.

"Dora was dying, though the woman properly enough refrained from telling me then, and for some hours afterward. Then I asked the question that I had been burning to ask ever since she brought the baby in.

"'Is this child a boy or a girl?'

"'A little deliky boy, honey.'

"'Gatha! Does anybody know about its being a boy?'

"'No, honey. Not eben its moder; nor yet about its bein' here at all. There ain't a soul in this part of the house but me to know anyfing about anyfing.'

"'Then, 'Gatha, listen to me. If you tell about Mrs. Percie's baby at all, tell everybody that it is a girl. And tell them that mine is a boy. Will you do this for me, 'Gatha?'

"'Yes, honey, sure,' said this devoted slave. 'Wouldn't I do anyfing in de worl' you tell me to do, even a'most ef I was to die for it?'

"'And do I not know that you would, my dear, faithful 'Gatha? Then go to Mrs. Percie and attend to her, and as soon as you can leave her with safety come back to me. And then I will tell you the reason why I wish to swap children with her without letting her, or any one else, know anything about it,' I said.

"'I mind what you say, honey. And I s'pects I knows what you mean. I has heard people talk 'bout de Carew 'state bein' 'tailed on to de boy heirs, and how you wouldn't have nuffin of it, ef so be your chile was a gal,' said the nurse.

"'That is the case, 'Gatha. And I know you will stand by me,' I said, delighted to find that she understood me so easily, and would serve me so thoroughly.

"I spent the next two hours in fighting down all conscientious scruples. Dora Percie, I said, being a young wife, might have many more boys after this one; but I a widow could never hope to have one to heir the great Carew estate. The temptation was too overpowering! I yielded. When Agatha came back we matured between us our plan for exchanging the children. And that morning the news was spread through the household that Mrs. Percie had a fine girl, and I a puny, delicate little boy. And the wiseacres of the kitchen shook their heads and said:

"'No wonder, poor soul! Losing her husband the sudden way she did, and fretting and pining after him, as she must have done, injured the child, and so no wonder he came into the world such a poor little puny boy.'

"Later in the morning the doctor came. But he could do no good to Dora Percie. She passed away that afternoon. The doctor visited me and looked at both the children, and asked me if I thought I should be able to take charge of both infants until a wet-nurse could be procured for Mrs. Percie's little girl.

"I was so pleased to hear him say Mrs. Percie's little girl, so naturally, that I promptly declared myself to be quite equal to the care of both children.

"It seems that Dr. Mix had been warned that I knew nothing of the household tragedy. So he never hinted it to me.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE MURDER.

"It transpired that Reginald Percie had really not left the neighborhood of Raven Rocks, when he affected to go to Richmond.

"He had said that he intended to start for Richmond, and so had deceived his wife into the belief that he was going there.

"And at Eyrie he had actually taken his seat inside the Richmond coach and started as for that city, and so had convinced his servant that he had really gone there.

"But, in fact, he went no farther than a little post town called Fir Top, where he got out of the coach and walked off to a farm, where he happened to have a race horse in training.

"Here he hired a good nag, and under cover of the dark night, rode back to Raven Rocks.

"He left his horse at the stable of his land-steward, at the base of the mountain, and went on foot to the park, where he walked and watched around the house until after midnight, when he returned to the land-steward's house and astonished Mr. Bullock by asking for a bed there for the night, and saying, in explanation, that he had been watching for a poacher whom he wished to identify.

"The bed was promptly got ready for 'the squire,' and he retired. He breakfasted with the steward's family, warned them to say nothing to any one of his being there, and walked out into the wooded part of the park, where, under cover, he watched all day the approaches to the house.

"At nightfall he hastened back to the steward's house, took a slight meal, told Mr. Bullock that he meant to watch again that night, and then hurried forth to the park.

"He watched and waited there through the tedious hours of that cold winter evening until after ten o'clock,

when he gave up the vigil, for that time, and turned his weary steps once more toward the steward's house.

"It was when he was taking a short cut through the loneliest part of the park, in this dead hour of the night, that he suddenly came upon the unhappy pair standing under the deeper shadows of the group of cedar trees. He took no time to ascertain how accidental was their meeting, how blameless their conversation, but in his jealous and insane fury he shot down his fancied rival as has been described, and then set out for the town of Wendover, which was the county seat, where the court was at that time sitting. He arrived shortly after sunrise, went to a magistrate's office, stated he had slain the lover of his wife, and gave himself up to answer for the deed.

"The coroner arrived at Raven Rocks that afternoon, viewed the dead body of Arthur Pentliore, empaneled a jury, and proceeded to hold the inquest.

"Reginald Percie was brought from Wendover in charge of two sheriff's officers, and confronted with the dead body.

"He had not learned of the death of his wife, and therefore he was calmer than he otherwise could have been.

"The coroner found unexpected witnesses in the crowd, and was proceeding to take their testimony, when Colonel Percie stepped up to the table, and said:

" 'Let this cease. I killed the caitiff because he deserved death at my hands. If I had not killed him last night, I should have killed him this morning, or the first time hereafter that I should find him. I do not regret the deed. And I am prepared to take the consequences.'

"Having said this, he returned to his seat between the two sheriff's officers.

"After this, there was nothing to be done but to bring in a verdict in accordance with the prisoner's confession.

"This was done, and Reginald Percie was regularly committed to prison on the charge of the willful murder of Arthur Pentliore.

"Before he was taken away from the house, however, he was led into another room, where the family physician

was waiting for him, and Dr. Mix gravely informed him of the death of his wife.

"Reginald Percie was brought to his senses as by the flash and shock of a thunderbolt.

"At first he could not believe it.

"What! She, young and strong and firm and full of bright, defiant life! She to die so suddenly! He would not believe it.

"But when the truth, with all its ghastly details, was forced upon his mind, to perfect conviction; when he learned that she had kept the house, and had no visitor during his absence, until that fatal night, when she was called out to attend the deathbed of a favorite servant, and that she was on her return from that mission of mercy when she met Arthur Pentliore, who had been to the house openly, to take leave of the family, and that the meeting in the park had been purely accidental on both sides, even as the victims had declared it to have been—then for the first time Reginald Percie felt himself to be a murderer.

"And when he learned further that his innocent wife had been stricken down to madness and death, by the same blow that killed her cousin; that though she recovered from her deathly swoon, she never recovered her reason, but died after giving birth to a little girl, his horror, anguish and despair were boundless.

"He demanded to see the remains of his wife. And when he was taken to her chamber, where the beautiful statue-like body of Dora Percie lay, he fell upon it in such a paroxysm of agony, uttering such groans and cries of anguish as not all the tortures of the Inquisition would have been able to wring from his pride.

"When the storm of his passionate despair had in some measure subsided, he asked to see his child.

"Word was brought me in my sickroom—I had been informed of the terrible fact—to send the little girl to be seen by her father before he should go to prison.

"I took the child from my bosom, put her in the arms of Agatha, and sent her downstairs.

"I was afterward told that Reginald Percie took the childs in his arms, wept over her in an agony of sorrow, and exclaimed:

"'If I could ever again rejoice at anything, I should rejoice that you are a girl, my child—that no boy of mine will ever carry down to posterity my blighted name! You are a girl, and in the future some just man may love you for yourself alone, and well enough to overlook the family dishonor, for which you are not in any way to blame, and to marry you, and so change your blighted name. And your family woes will be forgotten. So may it be!'

"And so saying, without a blessing or a kiss, as if he felt indeed that his blessing would be a ban, and his kiss a contamination, he placed the child in the nurse's arms, and with a look of unutterable anguish, he turned away and buried his face in his hands.

"A few minutes later Reginald Percie was seated in his own carriage, attended by two sheriff's officers, and on his way to the Wendover jail.

"When Agatha brought the child back to me, and reported the words of the supposed father, I not only felt consoled, but justified in my action of changing the children.

"'You see, nurse, you and I have done no harm, but good in this affair,' I said.

"'Yes, mistess,' assented the woman, readily, 'I see dat soon's ebber Marse Reginald say how he so glad she gal, 'cause some o' dese days she marry and change her name.'

"'Yes,' I continued, 'my action was not only justifiable but meritorious. Both children will be benefited by the exchange. For my little girl, as a Carew, could have inherited no portion of her father's great estates, which are strictly entailed upon the male line. But as a Percie she will inherit the vast wealth of the Percies and Fairfaxes, which is not entailed. So in making her a Percie I have made her fortune and pleased the father, too. On the other hand, the little boy, as a Percie, would have inherited with his parents' vast wealth a tainted name that he could not have got rid of by marriage, but, on the contrary, must have imposed upon any young lady who might have consented to be his wife. But, as a Carew, he will inherit the great Carew etstates, with an honorable, untarnished name. So in making him a

Carew I have conferred an incalculable benefit upon him, and secured my own prosperity as well.'

"Agatha listened to all this as to an oracle. She was very profoundly impressed with a sense of my wisdom.

"And I knew not what sort of moral blindness came upon me then; but I, also, felt extremely well satisfied with myself. That which at first had seemed an impulsive act of selfishness, now appeared to be a deed of the greatest prudence and benevolence.

"So that night, being at peace with myself and all mankind, I slept the sleep of the righteous.

"I will not linger over the dreadful scenes that ensued. Reginald Percie was smitten with inexpressible remorse and despair. He would take no steps to defend himself, but his friends put forth every possible exertion to save him from conviction. Their efforts were in vain. The jury brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree, and he was sentenced to be hanged. Then his friends petitioned for his pardon, and as it was evident that he would not live to the day set for his execution, the governor of the State granted the pardon, and the dying man was brought home to Raven Rocks.

"Reginald Percie was sinking under no special disease, but by a general failure of the vital powers. He spoke but little, only murmuring from time to time:

" 'I fulfill the law! I give "a life for a life!" '

"It was on Friday evening, just seven weeks from the fatal night of the homicide, when, in the strong words of the common people, he 'changed for death.' He knew me no longer. He talked to Dora, to Arthur, to his aunt, and to his mother, as if they stood beside him.

"His last words were:

" 'I give "a life for a life!"—Arthur!—It is not hard! —I come, Dora!—Mother, I come!"

"And so he passed peacefully away.

" 'Ah, how much we had all to be thankful for in this quiet departure, so different from the awful doom that had been pronounced against him!

"And this I will say for the fierce, passionate, hot-blooded man: that, if ever the deepest repentance won pardon, then Reginald Percie was forgiven for the crime

that I firmly believe to have been committed under the influence of temporary insanity.

"Four days later we laid the remains of Reginald Percie beside those of his young wife.

"After the funeral I prepared to leave Raven Rocks, of which I had become thoroughly sick.

"But then I had to part with my lovely little dark-eyed girl, who, by the will of her supposed father, was destined to be brought up in a neighboring State, that she might not hear of her family tragedy.

"Cassy, who was nursing a young child of her own at that time, took charge of the babe, and, under the immediate supervision of Mr. Locke, conveyed it to his house in Washington City, there to abide until proper country lodgings could be found for her.

"I wept long and bitterly at parting with my child; but comforted myself with the reflection that I had secured for her a magnificent fortune, which she could never have obtained except through this separation, and by the substitution of a boy in her place had secured to him and myself a great estate, that I at least could not have continued to enjoy without a supposed male heir.

"I went back to Richmond and took up my residence in the handsome town house that my late husband had purchased and furnished for my use, and that I now had the satisfaction of believing would be my own for the term of my natural life.

"Here, after all the bustle of the removal was over and we had settled down comfortably in our own home, an alarming piece of news awaited me.

"Agatha came to me one day and said:

"'Mistess, I don't want to scare you, but I got a mighty bad piece of news to tell you.'

"'For Heaven's sake, Agatha, what is it?' I exclaimed, frightened and conscience-stricken.

"'Now, honey, don't be scared, don't. I said how I didn't want to scare you, fust fing.'

"'Is it anything about the exchange of the children?' I inquired, dropping my voice to a low whisper and trembling in every nerve of my body.

"'Well, yes, honey, it's 'bout de chillun. It's all found out by somebody 'sides we,' she muttered.

"'Who knows it?' I gasped.

"'Pendragon.'

"I heaved a deep sigh of relief. For if there was one human being in the world upon whose love, loyalty and devotion I could entirely depend, Pendragon was that one.

"He had tended me from my babyhood up to the present hour. He had been my 'horse,' drawing my little carriage in my infancy, my groom, attending me in all my rides in my childhood, and my own especial manservant in girlhood and womanhood. He had followed me to my new home when I married, and had attended my husband and myself when we crossed the ocean. He was very proud of his old master's family, and it was his favorite boast that he was 'none o' your C'rew niggers; he was one o' de Shooberry cullud people.'

"Such was Pendragon's record.

"For the rest, his love of me was his only religion; his duty to me his only law; and I his only object of worship.

"That was the reason why I felt so relieved when I heard that he was the custodian of my secret.

"But in another moment I relapsed into anxiety.

"I asked myself, how did Pendragon find out my secret? And might not others have discovered it as he did?

"I was about to put these questions to Agatha, when an instant's reflection convinced me that it would be better to see and question the man himself.

"'Go, Agatha, and send Pendragon up to me immediately,' I said.

"The woman went downstairs to do her errand.

"And in a few minutes Pendragon presented himself.

"As the black colossus stood before me, with his head bowed in an attitude of utter self-consecration, I felt how faithful he was, how ready to lay down his life for me, if necessary.

"And, moreover, I knew that whatever I had done, or might do, would seem altogether right and proper in his eyes.

"His queen could do no wrong.

"'Pendragon, I hear that you have discovered my secret,' I said, fixing my eyes upon him.

"'Axdently, mist'ess, axdently; no ways but so; and

would cut de tongue outen my head 'fore ever I'd tell it,' he answered, with respectful earnestness.

"'I am sure of that; but now tell me how you found it out, Pendragon?'

"'Well, mist'ess, I was makin' of a fire in your sittin'-room nex' to your bedroom, and de door was open 'tween de two. I come in so easy o' purpose to keep from 'sturbin' you, so you, nor likewise 'Gathy, couldn't hear me. And I lay down de logs on de fire soft as I was stealin' eggs from unnerneaf of a settin' hen. And den I hear you and 'Gathy talkin' 'bout changin' of de chillun. And I says to myse'f, how ef my mist'ess did it, it was right, and dat was all about it, and I'd nebber tell, no, not ef dey laid me on hot coals to make me do it. And I'd bite my tongue off first,' added the giant, with emphasis.

"'I am sure you would. But you will not be put through any such frightful ordeal, my good friend, even if any one else overheard the conversation besides yourself; but I hope no one else did.'

"'No, mist'ess, dey couldn't, 'cause dere was nobody in de room 'cept 'twas me; and de door leadin' to de passage was shet and was a good way from de open door onto your room besides.'

"'And there was no one in my room except Agatha and myself. So I suppose the secret is safe.'

"'I suppose it is, mist'ess; but if you s'pects it ain't, and s'pects any partickler person knows it, as oughtn't to know it, tell me who it is and I'll make it safe,' said the colossus.

"I shuddered! I often shuddered at the blind devotion of my slave, which made him as ready to murder as to die for my sake.

"'There is no one, Pendragon, who could possibly, under the circumstances, have discovered my secret. I know that it is safe.'

"'Yes, mist'ess, and if ebber it shouldn't be, jes let me know and I'll make it safe,' he repeated.

"It is scarcely necessary to say that in after life I proved the fidelity of Pendragon to be far more enduring than that of Agatha. Agatha's devotion to me had conditions and limits. Pendragon's was unconditional and unlimited. There lay the difference.

"I have now given you the full history of your exchange as children, with all the circumstances that led to the act, and all the temptations that prompted it.

"What followed you both know, either from hearsay or from personal experience.

"As the years rolled on, I congratulated myself more and more on the fortunate exchange that I had made, and I felt more and more secure in my position until three years ago, when I was rudely startled out of my fancied security.

"It was winter, and in the height of the Richmond season, when I was living in my town house, in a whirl of fashionable pleasure.

"If I remember aright, I was dressing to go out to a dinner party, when a letter was brought me bearing the Eyrie postmark and superscribed in the most abominable handwriting I ever saw.

"I opened it with a feeling of simple curiosity, and without any premonition of the shock it would give me.

"The letter was from my faithful slave Pendragon.

"And it gave the alarming information that old Agatha had been converted at a camp-meeting and was suffering, under a severe visitation of conscience, for the part she had taken in the exchange of the children. In a word, she meant to make a full confession of what she called 'the fraud,' and it was only at Pendragon's earnest solicitation that she consented to defer that confession for three days until she could see me.

"I do not think that you can even imagine the effect this letter had on me. Exposure and ruin after all these years of prosperity and triumph! There was madness in the thought. And I was prepared to use any sort of means that might be necessary to save myself. There was no time to write. I must hurry down to Raven Rocks and see the maniac at once before she could have an opportunity of plucking down ruin upon my head."

Here followed an account of Kate Carew's memorable visit to Raven Rocks, and of the imprisonment of old Agatha, with Pendragon as her jailer. She concluded this portion of her narrative as follows:

"I said to Pendragon: 'You must keep Agatha closely

confined; but take as good care of her and treat her as kindly as will be consistent with her safe keeping.'

"'Yes, mist'ess, I can do dat. But ef she's to be kep' perfect safe, dere oughtn't to be nobody about de house 'cept 'tis me—nobody at all which could ebber be a spy on me, mist'ess,' he explained.

"I acknowledged the prudence of his proposition, and assured him that he should have the exclusive possession of the house with his prisoner.

"That same afternoon I left Raven Rocks for Eyrie. And that night I took the stage for Richmond, taking old Cornwallis with me, and leaving Pendragon in sole charge of the manor-house and its secret captive.

"You will now understand the mystery of Agatha's disappearance, and the origin of the Raven Rocks ghost story.

"But there are other events of more recent date, and intimately bearing upon your present and future welfare, that I must hasten to explain.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER SHOCK.

"At the close of the second day after leaving Raven Rocks, I arrived at Richmond.

"I remained in Richmond only long enough to pack up my wardrobe, and then I went on to Washington to accept the invitation of my Aunt Shrewsbury, which was cordially indorsed by her benefactress, Miss 'Percie,' as she was falsely called.

"I need not dwell upon my arrival in Washington and first meeting with Musa 'Percie.'

"It took all the strength of my will to control the emotions that almost overwhelmed me on beholding in her a beautiful counterpart of myself, as I had been at her age, and as indeed I still remained with every little change.

"My so-called son did not join me in Washington, as I had invited him to do. His studies confined him to his college.

"But I did not regret that when I saw more brilliant prospects opening before my daughter.

"Enough. To dwell further upon this period would be but 'vain repetition.'

"Two years later Musa refused a duke to marry the very man, of all men, whom it was best for her to marry. And if my ambition for my daughter's advancement was somewhat disappointed, my conscience was at least soothed. And I made up my mind, upon the first convenient opportunity, to enlighten the young couple as to the secret of their exchange. I said to myself that now all was well; no harm had been done; no one had been wronged.

"Strangely enough, I never thought of the heir-at-law, who had been diplomated out of the Raven Rocks estate. I come now to what brought this heir-at-law to my mind.

"You know that a few weeks after your marriage, that is to say, about the middle of February, the Washington season closed for Lent.

"I accepted an invitation from Clarice Howard to accompany Mrs. Shrewsbury on her visit to The Shoals.

"I came down here with Mrs. Shrewsbury on the first of March.

"We were met at the landing by Colonel Carew and Espirita, who had been asked to meet us at The Shoals.

"And as soon as I saw him, I remembered and said to myself:

"'There is the heir-at-law of Raven Rocks.' And my slumbering conscience was disturbed, and at the same time all my good intentions disarranged.

"But this did not last long. I cast care to the winds, as I have always been accustomed to do, and gave myself up to the enjoyment of my visit, and especially of my old worshiper's attentions.

"Whenever my conscience tried to trouble me, I soothed it by the assurance that if ever a fair opportunity presented itself I would certainly set all things right between the heir-at-law and the actual possessors of Raven Rocks.

"The opportunity, or I should rather say, the neces-

sity, of an explanation came much sooner than I had expected or desired.

"On Thursday last, Pendragon arrived from Raven Rocks, and told me of your unexpected advent there. I knew then that the day of reckoning had come. And I felt really glad and relieved that the duty of explanation was at last forced upon me. No one can know the weight of a guilty secret but the one who has it to bear, and who has not the moral courage to cast it off.

"Colonel Carew was coming to ride with me that morning. And I resolved that as soon as he should arrive, I would call him to a private interview in the library, and there 'make a clean breast of it,' by telling him the whole story of the exchange of the children.

"The ordeal that was before me did not even deprive me of an appetite for breakfast. I knew I could depend on the devotion of my old worshiper to put the fairest construction upon my act. And as he was the only one who had really been wronged, he was also, of course, the only one of whom I felt obliged to ask forgiveness.

"After breakfast I went upstairs and dressed myself in the most becoming riding habit and hat that I possessed. I took extra pains with my toilet, and really think I looked unusually well.

"Then I went downstairs into the drawing-room, which was unoccupied by any one else, and there I waited for my old adorer. He was soon announced and entered the room. After the usual greetings had passed between us, and I was about to invite him into the confessional, I was, to my surprise and relief, forestalled in my intention by his abruptly saying that he admired me more than any other living woman, and asked me if I would accept him as a lifelong worshiper, in the shape of a husband.

"There was my opportunity ready-made to meet my necessity.

"I laid my hand in his, and told him that I would willingly, gladly accept him as my husband, but that, in truth, I was not worthy to become his wife.

"This piece of humility so affected the old gentleman, that he swore in terribly strong language that I was a perfect woman, a goddess and an angel, which, if any

man questioned, he was ready to blow out that man's idiotic brains, and to take the consequences.

"I laid my hand on his again with a closer pressure, and told him that in my early youth, before I was twenty years old, I had been subjected to an irresistible temptation, and in yielding to it I had committed a great sin.

"Then I stopped, for he suddenly turned pale as death and burst into a cold perspiration. I then went on and in a few, brief, hasty words I told him the story of the exchange of the children. He suddenly raised himself up, and wiped his face and drew a deep breath of relief, and said:

"'Oh, is that all? Why, I thought—thought by what you said, I thought——' and then he stopped; but he looked relieved and radiant.

"'That is all,' I said, coming to his relief; 'but is not that enough?' I gloomily inquired; for I was disposed to magnify my sin, so as to provoke him to depreciate it.

"And I do believe that his will was so good to me, that he would gladly have assured me that I had performed a wise and good act in the exchange of the children, only that he was, with all his faults, too honest to do that. So he said to me:

"'Well, child, if you have done evil, you certainly had, as you say, an almost irresistible temptation toward it, and much to palliate it. If ever there was a cruel and unjust law, it is that of entail, which cuts off the daughters, the most helpless part of a family, and settles property on the sons, or failing them, on perhaps some distant male heir-at-law. And if I am the only party wronged, I forgive you freely, Kate! If Heaven forgives you as freely as I do, you can pass the sponge over the slate, child, and commence a brand new account—as most sinners are too apt to do, Kate, as soon as ever the old one is squared.'

"I declare I was so moved by the rough magnanimity of the old man that I caught his hand and pressed it to my lips with as cordial a kiss as I ever bestowed in my life.

"'And more, I tell you, Kate,' he added, 'while I live your children shall not be disturbed in their possession of Raven Rocks. I am sorry I cannot control the disposi-

tion of the property after my death, but as the estate is so absurdly entailed upon the male line I cannot do it. So after my death, the heir-at-law—whoever the thief may happen to me, for I am sure I don't know—will come in and take possession. And now I want an answer to my question. Will you take me for your husband, my dear?' he inquired.

"'Of course I will, and will try to make you as happy as ever I can,' I answered. And so we were engaged.

"Well, when old Peter Carew died, grand old gentleman that he was, I resolved that if ever I did marry again, I would not marry an old man. But, you see, in all my widowed years I have had but two classes of suitors—impecunious young men, with whom I only flirted, and wealthy old men, not at all like my princely first husband, and at whom I laughed. And now, at forty-one, I am about to marry another old man. He is sixty-three.

"However, I like Pirate's Peak. No one of the proprietors has ever appreciated it yet as I do. I shall make it a magnificent marine residence, that shall be the envy of all the wealthy and fashionable world. It is near Bay Beauty, and near the Shoals, and so I shall live among my own people.

"And I like the Old Harry, too, though the world will never believe it. I really do like the good-hearted, hot-headed, bad-tempered, generous, violent, overbearing, old fellow.

"And, oh, how I shall enjoy breaking him in and training him!

"We are to be married very soon—sooner than Espirita is, because, as old Harry pathetically put it, we have not so much time to spare as the young folks have. I requested him to speak for himself, as I had full thirty or forty good years before me yet.

"Espirita is indignant. I overheard her tell her father that:

"Kate would certainly pay him off well, for forgetting her mother so soon. And that she thanked fortune she should be out on the frontier, far away from the sound of our inevitable squabbles, and with nothing worse than Indian warfare to disturb her peace. And, in conclusion,

she warned him that if he should get badly worsted in our fights, he must not come to her for safety, for she would not protect him.

"Old Harry bore this scolding with wonderful meekness for him. I think that Espirita must have begun to train him herself.

"Now a few words of explanation, at the last. You will notice that in the first part of this manuscript the writing looks older than in the last part. In fact, it is older. It was written last autumn, when you two were first betrothed, and when I thought to put you in possession of the secret, and preferred to do it in writing rather than in person.

"The last few pages were, of course, added after the arrival of Pendragon and the interview with Colonel Carew.

"No one here, except Colonel Carew, knows anything about the exchange of the children, nor do we intend to let them know it until we have seen and consulted you.

"I shall send this off early to-morrow morning by Pendragon, who will leave in the seven o'clock boat for Richmond, and go on immediately to Raven Rocks. It is late. Good-night. KATE CAREW."

During the reading of this communication, very little had been said between August and Musa.

Pauses, mutual glances and sighs, more frequently than words, had expressed the feelings of embarrassment and humiliation with which they received her confession.

Musa, for the first time, heard all the particulars of that dark domestic tragedy, which had so long and so unjustly overshadowed her own young life.

And it was no relief to her mind to learn that it did not concern her own family in the least, but that it concerned the family of her husband, whom she loved more than her own life.

And it was a shame and sorrow to know that her own mother had been guilty of such a fraud as she had acknowledged.

Musa understood now from whom she had inherited that power of secretiveness which had tempted her to conceal her own real life from the knowledge of those

who had loved and trusted her so entirely, and whom she, in return, should have loved and trusted perfectly.

And she bowed her head in utter self-abasement.

August learned, for the first time, that he was not the son and heir of Peter and Kate Carew, but that he was one of the handsome, fiery Percies, descendants of Hotspur, whose beauty of person and brilliance of intellect he had inherited, happily without that excess of pride and violence of temper, which, in the case of Reginald Percie, had brought ruin upon their house.

Having finished the perusal of the manuscript, Mr. Carew folded it up, laid it upon the glowing fire, and held it down with the point of the poker until it was burned to ashes. Then, as the white dust floated up the chimney, he put the poker on its stand, and said:

"There! now let us forget all about that confession, except where we are forced to remember it."

"But, August, what shall we do? It is all so very mortifying and perplexing! What can we do?" inquired Musa.

"My love, we 'can' do our duty. We can always do that, under all circumstances. And now we must do the duty nearest to us, of course. We must give up Raven Rocks. And, dear, we have enough without it. We have Crow Wood and Bay Beauty, and the house in Richmond and the one in Washington. We have a plenty without Raven Rocks, which must be restored."

"But, oh, the embarrassment, the perplexity, and the mortification attending all this!" said Musa, in distress.

"My dear, there need be none of the annoyance you fear," soothingly replied August.

"And then our names!" she continued. "What an entanglement is there! You were born a Percie, and fraudulently brought up as a Carew, and you married me, a Carew, who had been fraudulently brought up as a Percie. And I find out that I, who thought myself by birth a Percie, was really a Carew; and when I thought myself a Carew by marriage, find myself a Percie! It is confusing enough to derange one's mind. August, what can be done about our names? It would make a terrible talk if now you were to resume the name of Percie. Yet I do not see what else you can do, since it is your own."

"I shall never resume the name of Percie, my love. My unhappy father, in the midst of his deepest misery (as we learn from Mrs. Carew's narrative), yet rejoiced that no son of his would ever carry down his ill-fated name to posterity. His dying will shall rule me in this hour. I will never resume his name, to pass it on to any son of mine. I retain the time-honored name of Carew, which was your name, and by which I have been known all my life. And I will take measures to have it made legally my own."

"That will be very wise; but, oh! the publicity, August!"

"There need be little or no publicity. Much of this business can be done quietly. And besides, we are going to Europe, you know, to be absent several years. And even if there should be some little question and conjecture why I should require an act of legislature to make more completely my own the name I was always known by, it will all pass out of the minds of men before our return. Come, now, dear! We have sat too long over this worrying subject. Come, get your wraps and come out with me for a walk before dinner."

They went down the evergreen avenue leading to the porter's lodge, and out upon the highroad. The short snowfall that had kept them indoors all the forenoon had ceased, and the sky had cleared.

As they walked on, Musa asked a question that her heart had been aching to ask ever since they had finished reading Kate Carew's confession, but which she had refrained from asking lest she should appear too anxious to trust her own personal feelings in the way of her husband's interests. And even now she put the question in its most delicate and unexacting form:

"How long do you think this business of the estate will delay our voyage to Europe, August?"

"Why, not an hour, love—not one hour, of course. Do you think, dear Musa, that any 'business' can be so important to me as that of the recovery of your child; or any interest so urgent, so pressing, as that of allaying the anxiety of your heart? Dear wife, trust me once for all, when I assure you that your happiness is the first object of my life," he earnestly replied.

She burst into tears, and caught his hand and pressed it to her lips and to her heart, as she murmured:

"Oh, I am so unworthy of you! I feel it more and more every day that I spend in your society and know you better. Yours is love without self-love. And, oh! I am so unworthy of it! I, in whose nature even love is alloyed with selfishness. I am so unworthy of you, August!"

He stopped her self-accusation with a caress, and they walked on in silence until he said:

"Yes, we leave this to-morrow morning for New York. And we sail on Wednesday, as arranged. You are quite prepared, Musa?"

"Oh, yes. I finished all our preparations last night, even to the packing of the little handbag and the laying out of our traveling suits," answered Musa.

"That is well. We must start very early. We must not risk losing a stagecoach, a train, or a boat, if we would make sure of our passage in Wednesday's steamer. And if the *Darien* makes her usual fast time, we may get to Liverpool in season to intercept the sailing ship, the *Fairy*, I think it is, and take our child off before the ship lands."

"Oh! the prospect thrills me with joy, August!" said Musa.

They walked on and made the circuit of the wall surrounding the park, and then returned to the house in time to dress for dinner.

"Fate meets us in the dark!"

After dinner the husband and wife returned to the small crimson parlor in which they had passed the morning in reading Kate Carew's confession.

They seated themselves in two crimson-covered easy-chairs before the fine wood fire and prepared to make this last evening at home a very pleasant one.

Between them stood a round table covered with a crimson cloth. Upon it stood a lighted astral lamp, around which lay books and papers.

Musa and August sat talking over the prospects of their voyage and of the strong probability of reaching Liverpool by the fast steamer, in advance of the slow sailing ship, and of taking the child before the nurse could have

an opportunity of landing and hiding herself even for an hour in Liverpool.

Musa began to look among the books on the center-table for something to read aloud, when her eyes and hand at once alighted on a packet of papers, and she exclaimed:

"Why, look here! Here are the New York papers. They do not usually reach us until Monday morning. How is this?" she inquired, as she began to tear off the envelopes.

"Why, I suppose Pendragon, who arrived by the Richmond coach at Eyrie last night, had the forethought to call and get our latest mail for us. And, now I think of it, I remember seeing him lay a packet of newspapers on the table just as he handed me Mrs. Carew's manuscript. But the contents of that manuscript actually drove all thoughts of the other parcel out of my mind, and I really should not have thought of it again if you had not happened to see it. How many papers have you there?"

"Three. Here, take these two. I want to look over the *Herald*," said Musa, handing over a *Tribune* and a *Times* to Mr. Carew.

He opened the first-named, and began to look over its contents.

He was deep in a political editorial, when a piercing shriek from Musa made him start to his feet and spring toward her. He was too late!

The paper had dropped from her hands, and she had fallen to the floor in a deathlike swoon.

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE OR DEATH.

In great alarm, August Carew caught up the fainting form of his wife from the floor where she had fallen, and laid her on the sofa.

Then he seized a glass of water that stood upon the table and dashed a little of it over her face.

The shock revived her. With a gasp and a shudder, she recovered her breath and opened her eyes.

"How are you, dear love, and what caused this swoon?"

inquired August, bending over her and tenderly wiping the dampness from her face.

She looked at him in a dull, bewildered way, and answered nothing. A few seconds passed.

And then she returned to full consciousness, only to fall into the wildest lamentations and the bitterest self-reproaches, which filled the mind of her husband with astonishment and anxiety.

With all the vehemence of her unrestrained, impassioned nature, she abandoned herself to the storm of sorrow that swept over her soul—writhing, wringing her hands, twisting her white fingers in her ebon locks, and uttering the deepest sobs and groans.

Only from her despairing cries could he gather at length that there had been another disaster at sea, and that the *Fairy* had gone down in a gale with nearly all on board.

At last, fearing for the sanity, and even for the life of his beloved wife, he hurried to the medicine chest and prepared a dose of morphia, which he brought to her.

"Musa, my dearest, take this. It will calm you," he said.

"Oh, yes! yes! will it? I wish it would calm me unto death! unto death! and rid me of myself, my curse, and rid you of me, your living bane!" she cried, as she grasped the glass and eagerly swallowed its contents.

She soon fell under the soothing influence. Her suffocating sobs subsided, her deep sighs ceased. And she became so calm that her husband called her women in to attend her. They came promptly.

"Don't you be no ways scared 'bout dis yer, Marse Gus," said Cassy, as soon as she perceived the lady's condition, and mistook its cause; "don't you be 'tall 'larmed. It's werry nateral in her state o' health, Marse Gus, which I's seen her so before," she added, as with assistance of the two girls she raised the beloved mistress and conveyed her to her apartment, and carefully and tenderly put her to bed, where she soon fell into a deep sleep.

Then for the first time August found leisure to examine more particularly into the causes of her distress.

Leaving her in the care of her faithful nurse, he returned to the drawing-room and picked up the paper that

had fallen from her fainting hands to the floor. The first column upon which his eyes fell told him the terrible truth. Almost overcome by the sight, he sank into the nearest armchair, as, with all the eagerness of anxiety, he read the heading of the fatal article:

Another awful disaster at sea. Wreck of the bark *Fairy,* with two hundred souls on board. Full details of the disaster as reported by the survivors picked up in the lifeboat by the *Mercury.*

Then followed voluminous accounts of the shipwreck as given by half-a-dozen eyewitnesses. Mr. Carew read the whole of the tragic story through. And then, headsick and heartsick with horror and grief, he covered his eyes with his hand and sat wondering how he should ever be able to comfort his wife in her unparalleled afflictions, when her sorrow must be deeply embittered by remorse for the terrible consequences of her own wrong-doing, in the tragic fate of the child she had unnaturally put away from her own maternal bosom, and thus exposed to the very disaster and death it had suffered.

Thinking of these things, August Carew dreaded the awakening of Musa from her opium sleep. Of course, now there could be no further question of their journey to New York and their voyage to Europe. For she would be totally unfit for the journey, even supposing that there was still any object in taking it, which there was not.

The night passed drearily, and in the morning Cornwallis was sent to Eyrie for the doctor.

August, bending over Musa, saw her lips move; and bending lower to catch the words she was trying to form, he heard her gasp as well as she could for the ague that shook her nearly to dissolution.

"August, dear, never mind. It is better even for you that such an unhappy wretch as I am should die."

"Oh, hush, Musa! hush! You will not die, dear love! This is but a common chill," replied her husband, controlling himself with a great effort.

These were the last intelligible words that Musa spoke for many days. The ague passed off, and was succeeded by a burning fever that soon mounted to her brain.

August Carew never left her side. He wrote for his

mother and Mrs. Shrewsbury to come to Raven Rocks at once, telling them of Musa's perilous state.

Days passed. Saturday morning dawned. It was a very anxious day on many accounts. The chief cause of anxiety was that the crisis of Musa's terrible fever was approaching. The next twenty-four hours would decide her fate.

Saturday afternoon her fever was higher than it had ever been. She no longer tossed about or moaned, but lay silent and motionless in the grasp of the dread disease. Her head seemed burning up with an inward, raging fire. The ice-cloths placed upon it dried up in a few moments.

August sat on one side of the bed, constantly renewing the applications and silently praying to the Lord for help, as only they pray who see their beloved ones in the grip of death and feel their own impotence to save.

Cassy sat on the other side, wretched because she could do nothing, though she would have given her own old life for the life shriveling away in that cruel inward fire.

The doctor, whose headquarters were now at Raven Rocks, had gone to visit his other patients and had not yet returned.

The awful stillness of the sick-chamber that in a few hours might be the death-chamber, was broken by a low rap at the door.

Mr. Carew signed to Cassy to go and see who was there. The woman obeyed, and through the partly-opened door a short, whispered conference was held.

Then Cassy closed the door, and came to the side of her master and whispered:

"Miss Kate C'rew and Madam Shooberry have 'rived."

"Thank Heaven! Where are they?" inquired August Carew, in a low tone.

"Dey's bofe down in de parlor, waitin' to come up an' see Miss Musa."

"Here, Cassy, take my place for a few moments, while I go down and see them," whispered Mr. Carew, as he noiselessly glided from his seat and from the room.

He hurried downstairs and opened the parlor door.

There he found the two ladies still in their traveling suits, standing before the fire, just off their long journey, but too much excited by anxiety to be sensible of fatigue.

"Oh, August! is it true?" inquired Kate Carew, rushing toward him.

"It is too true!" he murmured, in broken accents.

Neither the man nor the woman at that moment thought of the strange confession that had recently been written by the one and read by the other, and which had so entirely changed their relations to each other.

Kate burst into tears.

"How do you do, Mrs. Shrewsbury? It was very kind of you to come," said Mr. Carew, gravely saluting the elder lady.

"I could do no otherwise. I would hasten to Musa in her extremity as soon as I would to Clarice. But I hope the case is not so bad as it has been represented to be," said the old lady.

"It could not be exaggerated. I fear she is sinking," said August, struggling to maintain an outward composure, while his soul was on the rack.

Kate threw herself into an easy-chair, sobbing convulsively.

"Let me go to her at once," said Mrs. Shrewsbury, beginning to draw off her gloves.

"But you are tired," said Mr. Carew.

"And she is in extremity. I will go to her now. There will be time enough for me to rest after——" Mrs. Shrewsbury paused for an instant, and meeting Mr. Carew's keen, anxious, agonized gaze, she added, valiantly, "after she has got well."

While speaking she had been hastily divesting herself of bonnet, veil, furs and mantle, and she was now ready to be shown to Musa's room.

"Come, then, dear madam. I have heard that you are a model nurse, and I shall be more than grateful to you, if you can do anything for my poor wife," said August, as he led the way upstairs.

He led his visitor into the sickroom and up to the side of the bed. She bent over and looked at the patient.

There Musa lay, motionless, helpless, unconscious of all around her. They might have let in a glare of light—she would scarcely have seen it. They might have talked loudly at her side—she would not have heard them.

Mrs. Shrewsbury took the parched wrist between her

fingers and felt the flying pulse, whose fierce, swift beats could not be counted. She laid her hand upon the red-hot head and snatched it away immediately.

"Why," she whispered, earnestly—"why has not her hair been cut off? Get me a pair of shears immediately."

"Her beautiful hair!" said August.

"This great shock of hair is helping to kill her—is depriving her of her very last chance of life. Get me a pair of shears, Cassy! I wonder the doctor did not order all this heavy hair cut off."

"He mentioned it, but did not press the matter."

"Ah, he thought she was going to die anyhow, I s'pose, and that it did not matter. But as for me, I never give any one up. Cassy, are you going to bring me a pair of shears?"

"Yes, mist'ess—here dey is," said the old woman.

Mrs. Shrewsbury went ruthlessly to work upon that glorious suit of hair. She passed her hand under Musa's head and shoulders, and lifted about half a bushel of it on her arm, and laid it up over the pillow, to be cut with more ease.

"How hot that kept the back of her head and neck! Good gracious! no wonder you couldn't break the fever!"

With these words Mrs. Chief Justice proceeded to execute the sentence she had passed. As she snipped away, the beautiful long purple-black tresses fell under her shears. August, sitting near, with a large newspaper spread across his knees, reverently, tenderly gathered them up as they fell; and when all had been cut off, he folded them up in the paper, and put them carefully away.

And Musa's beautiful head was smoothed and raised higher by two or three more pillows, and covered with ice.

And then, by Mrs. Shrewsbury's order, her hands and feet were plunged into separate basins of hot water adjusted on the bed so as to accommodate them. And the ice to the head, and the hot water to the hands and feet were renewed as often as necessary.

Then leaving Musa in a more comfortable condition than she had found her, Mrs. Shrewsbury retired to change her traveling suit for a dressing-gown and to take

a cup of tea. After these refreshments she returned to the sickroom and peremptorily ordered Mr. Carew off to bed.

At first he absolutely refused to go.

"Well, you say that this night will decide her fate. Probably it will. And you know now who is the best fitted to guard her through the night; the anxious, troubled young man, worn out by a week's watching, or the self-collected, experienced woman who comes fresh to the duty, and who has already given a proof of her skill."

"But can we not both stay? I will not interfere. I will only sit here," pleaded August.

"No. If you do not go to bed immediately, I will throw up the case," said Mrs. Chief Justice, with her most supreme judicial manner.

"I will go. Heaven bless you, Aunt Shrewsbury! Words cannot thank you," said Mr. Carew, as he went away.

He went no farther than the next room, where, without undressing, he threw himself upon the outside of the bed, feeling sure that he should keep awake, watching and listening with the keenest vigilance for any sound or summons from the sickroom.

But so great was his bodily prostration, that no sooner was his head down on the pillow than his senses were whirled away and whelmed in a deep and dreamless sleep. The night waned, and he slept on. Morning dawned, and he slept on. The household was astir, the doctors came and went, people walked to and fro in the hall, outside, and came in and out of his own room; and the sleeper undisturbed, slept on.

The struggle between life and death was going on in the next chamber, in the frame of her who was dear to him as his own soul, and still the sleeper, worn out in mind and body with a week's watching and anxiety, slept on, in a deep and dreamless sleep, oblivious of all the past, unconscious of all that was going on around him in the present.

At length the late winter sun arose, and shining brightly through the open shutters of the uncurtained and neglected window, struck full upon his eyelids and woke him.

He started up with a keen pang of remorse.

"Oh, cruel! cruel!" he cried, "for me to sleep at all, and more than cruel for them to let me sleep through these last precious hours of her dear life."

He hurried impetuously out into the hall toward his wife's chamber. He met Kate Carew coming out of the sickroom.

"How is she? How is my dear wife? Oh, why did you let me sleep so long?" he demanded, eagerly, almost breathlessly.

"Oh, August!" cried Kate Carew, throwing herself into his arms, and bursting into tears.

"She is dead! Musa is dead! Oh, Heaven!" cried the young husband, reeling back.

"No, August! no, darling, no!" exclaimed Kate, sobbing for joy—"she is better. Her fever is broken. She is safe."

Breathing a fervent thanksgiving, August Carew passed into the sick-chamber. The window shutters were open, and the windows, draped with their rich, old crimson curtains, admitted a subdued rosy light that filled the room.

August went silently up to the bedside. The crimson bed curtains had been looped high to admit fresh air to the invalid. He stooped and looked upon her face. She seemed to be sleeping, but ah, what a blessed change had passed over her.

She now lay quietly upon a smooth and orderly bed, covered with a snow-white counterpane. Her head reposed upon a fresh, dry pillow. The ice-cloths that had wrapped it were now replaced by a dainty lace cap that softly framed in her delicate features. Her face was thin and white, indeed, in contour and color; but serene and tender in expression. Her eyes were closed, and the black lashes lay upon her white cheeks, forming, with the arched and jetty eyebrows, a lovely contrast to their whiteness. Her beautiful lips were softly shut, but rosy with the dawn of renewing life. Her fair, transparent fingers were lightly interlaced and lying upon her bosom.

"Is she sleeping?" whispered Mr. Carew, in a scarcely-audible voice, addressing Mrs. Shrewsbury, who occupied the easy-chair at the head of the bed.

"No, oh, no; you can speak to her if you wish," replied the old lady, in the same tone.

August did not speak until he stooped and pressed his lips to the calm white forehead of the seeming sleeper.

Musa opened her dark eyes and looked up in gentle and pleased surprise.

"August? You here, love? They told me you were sleeping, and I would not let them rouse you," she said, slowly and faintly, slipping her thin hand in his.

"Oh, my darling, my darling! I thank Heaven that you are so much better!" answered August, pressing her hand and stooping and kissing her pale red lips.

"Yes, thank Heaven! Did you sleep well, August? Are you rested, dear?" she next inquired.

"I slept well. But the sight of you, so much better, has refreshed me more than sleep," he said, with another gentle caress.

Her next question pained him. After a silence of a few moments she inquired, faintly:

"August, have you heard any further details of—the wreck?"

"No, love; there was nothing more to hear," he answered, gently and gravely.

"There were no—no—no bodies recovered?" she asked in a low, hesitating voice.

"No, dear love, none," he replied.

She sighed softly and asked no more questions then. August stood by the bed, holding her hand until she fainted off to sleep.

"There, now, you must go and get some breakfast, or we shall have you down sick," said Mrs. Shrewsbury, in a low but peremptory tone.

August stooped and lightly touched the sleeper's fair forehead with his lips, and then he turned and obeyed Mrs. Chief Justice.

When he entered the morning-room, he found Mrs. Kate Carew presiding over a small breakfast-table that had been set for him.

On seeing him, she arose, rang for the coffee and came to meet him.

"August, am I forgiven?" she inquired, putting her hand in his, and looking up into his eyes.

"Madam," he answered gravely and sweetly, "as soon as I had read your confession, I put it in the fire, and said that we would forget it. And now, I have no room for any other sentiment in my heart, but gratitude for our dear Musa's safety."

And he raised the hand she had given him and pressed it to his lips.

"But," she continued, hesitatingly, "will not this affair involve you in great legal embarrassments concerning your own name and estates?"

"No," he replied, gently; "the only person interested in this matter besides ourselves is Colonel Harold Carew——"

"He will never move to annoy you," interrupted Mrs. Carew.

"I presume not, from all I have heard. But that is not the point. His estate must be restored to him. I shall write and ask him to come on here, and meet Mr. Lyttleton Locke, whom I shall also invite to Raven Rocks, that we may have a settlement of this difficulty. We can make all necessary arrangements without trouble or publicity."

"But the name you bear—under which you were brought up—under which you were married—by which only you are known?" said Kate Carew, with an anxious look.

"I shall retain the name, and take measures as quickly and as quietly as I can to make it legally my own. And now let us drop the subject," he said.

"Willingly," said Kate Carew, as she rang the bell to have the breakfast service taken away, and arose from the table.

Kate had assumed the direction of domestic affairs, so as to leave Mrs. Shrewsbury at liberty to devote herself exclusively to Musa.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHANGE OF PLANS.

Mr. Carew returned to his young wife's chamber. He found Musa still sleeping lightly.

Musa slept a great deal for the next week. She had to make up for about ten days of raging fever, tossing and sleeplessness. Her convalescence was now so rapid as to surprise her medical attendants. Her youth and strong constitution prevailed over all her ills of mind and body.

The seventh day from that on which her fever left her she was able to sit up in the comfortable easy-chair so long occupied in turn by her nurses. And on the fourteenth day she joined the family circle at breakfast and took her first ride out.

She was very much changed; but in her husband's eyes she seemed lovelier than ever. Once she had a rich glowing brunette complexion, with crimson cheeks and crimson lips, and glorious dark eyes flashing with enthusiasm or melting with tenderness—all shaded with luxuriant blue-black ringlets.

She had now a thin face and clear pale complexion, with just a faint tint of color on her lips and with a brooding thoughtfulness in her large dark eyes, as wistful as those of her own little lost Musette. And this lovely face was shaded softly by the fine edge of the dainty lace cap she wore while her beautiful hair was growing.

While she treasured the memory of her angel child deep in her heart, she never spoke of her loss, but tried to be happy for the sake of her worshiped husband, and she succeeded at least in being cheerful.

Mrs. Shrewsbury and Kate Carew intended to remain with her at Raven Rocks until her full restoration to health and strength. Both ladies were devoted to her.

But since Musa's recovery, not a word had been said in her presence regarding the secret family history that had been made known to her just before her illness. She knew that Kate Carew was her mother, but did not by

her manner betray her knowledge. She waited for the elder lady to open the subject. And Kate, on her part, refrained from any allusion to it, from a fear of exciting Musa and retarding the progress of her convalescence.

Mr. Carew had written to Colonel Carew and to Mr. Lyttleton Locke, inviting them to come to Raven Rocks early in April.

Musa improved every day, and was able to ride out every morning.

At length one morning, near the end of March, Kate Carew came into Musa's chamber, where she found her seated alone, and looking very pretty and fragile, in her white merino dressing-gown and lace cap, and proposed that they should take a drive in the pony phaeton, Kate to hold the reins. Musa acceded in the proposal, and after they had got into the forest road Kate said:

"I have brought you out here for a purpose, dear Musa. I wished to talk to you alone, secure from interruption. I have something to say to you, dear."

"Say on, then, Kate."

"We have not once alluded to our relationship since it was made known to you, Musa," said the elder lady, gravely.

"But I have thought of it a great deal ever since I heard of it, Kate, dear."

"And I have thought of it ever since it existed."

"And you know, Kate, I loved you from the first time I ever saw you, nearly three years ago."

"And I loved you, darling, from the first time I ever saw you, nearly twenty-one years ago; although I never dared to see you after the first few weeks of your infant life, and never did see you until you were between eighteen and nineteen years of age. But, oh, how I longed for you in all those years, Musa," said the lady, sighing.

"Oh, Kate! oh, Kate! how much you must have suffered!" exclaimed Musa, tenderly. And her eyes filled with tears, as she thought of her own little lost Musette, and of all she had suffered in the separation from her child. "Oh, Kate, how could you bear it?"

"I had to bear that, or to bear worse; grinding poverty for us both. I chose the lighter evil of the two. Yet you can never know how hard the trial was," she added.

"Oh, yes, I can, Kate, better than you think."

"You still call me Kate," said the lady, with a smile.

"Yes, dear. It comes natural," said Musa, turning suddenly and kissing her beautiful mother. "I hope it doesn't displease you," she added, apologetically.

"Oh, not at all," answered the gay widow, as she returned the caress. "I rather like it—only it is odd. But that is not what I brought you out here to talk about. I had something else to tell you."

"Tell it, then, Kate."

"You are aware that Colonel Carew and myself are engaged to be married?"

"Yes; and I wish you both all manner of happiness."

"You do not dislike the idea of the marriage?"

"Oh, no, indeed! I like it, because I think you will be happier."

"Well, but August does dislike it."

"Has he told you so?"

"No; but I can read his thoughts."

"He only objects on account of the Old Harry's despotic temper. He thinks he will tyrannize over you," said Musa.

Here Kate broke into such a sudden explosion of laughter that the white filly started and ran a quarter of a mile before she could be pulled up.

"There!" exclaimed Kate, recovering her breath. "You are no longer an interesting invalid, Musa. You cannot be, you know. You have just uttered the richest joke of the season. Old Harry tyrannize over me! Anybody tyrannize over me! Look, you darling! Among the opprobrious epithets flung at me in my youth was that of 'the handsome horse-breaker.' I have not lost the cunning of my hand in middle age. But, oh, what is there in the breaking of the most vicious brute that ever kicked and trampled his rider to death equal to the excitement of taming that old lion, who has killed two women already! It will be glorious! It will form all the employment and interest of my declining years!"

"Oh, Kate! to enter upon your married life with such thoughts as these!" said Musa, gravely.

Again the widow's ringing laugh burst out upon the air. And again the sensitive white filly started; but Kate

had a firm hold upon the reins and kept her from running away.

"Fiddle-de-dee, my dear! You and I look at life from different points of view. You and I, who are so much alike externally, have very little in common internally. You are the true daughter of old Peter Carew, who used to say that love was religion, and marriage heaven, or something akin to it. I'm a Shrewsbury; of the earth, earthy; of the world, worldly; of myself, selfish.

"Kate, I would not allow any one else to say that of you."

"I presume not. It is the truth for all that. But that was not what I brought you out to talk about either. It seems as if I never should get to the point," complained the widow, pettishly, though laughing.

"Try, Kate," suggested Musa, dryly.

"Well, then, I got a letter from Colonel Carew last night, and he will be at Raven Rocks to-morrow evening."

"I shall be very glad to see him," said Musa, cordially.

"Thanks, dear. You know I really have no other home to invite him to," said the lady, apologetically.

"Oh, Kate! as if this were not as much your home as it is mine or August's," said Musa, affectionately.

"You are very kind to say so, dear. And now I am really afraid I shall startle you; but, as I have no other home but this—well, we think of being married here—next Tuesday."

"So soon! That does really startle me!" said Musa, in surprise. "So very soon!"

"Yes, dear, but you see the colonel very naturally complains that he has not as much time to lose now as he had when he was twenty," said the widow, archly.

"No, to be sure," assented Musa. "Now, Kate," she added, smiling, "I must get well immediately and make ready for the wedding, dear."

"You will do nothing of the sort. You may get well as soon as you please—the sooner the better; but you shall make no fuss over our wedding. I prefer that it shall be a very quiet one—so does the colonel. I like display on most occasions, but I should not like it on this particular one. After the wedding I intend to make

up for this moderation by every conceivable extravagance."

"If the colonel will permit you," said Musa, mischievously.

"If the colonel will permit me! That's a good one! Why, Musa, I intend to atone for every fault of my life by reforming that fine old family despot! I really like the Old Harry so much that I shall quite enjoy polishing him off. And now here we are 'out of the woods,'" said Kate, as they emerged upon the road that ran along between the foot of the mountain and the edge of the forest. "Shall we follow this road now, that will take us around to the rear of the park, or shall we turn back and go the way we came?"

"We will follow this road," said Musa.

"All right," said Kate, and she touched up the white filly, and they set off at a spanking rate for the manor house, where they arrived in time for luncheon.

"This drive through the free air has done you good, Musa. You have more color than when you set out. I feel better, too; there is a load off my mind," said Kate, as she drew up before the door and threw the reins to old Cornwallis, who had come to take charge of the horse and chaise.

Kate stepped from her low seat and handed Musa out.

"You will have to tell Mrs. Shrewsbury. She does not like to be surprised by the sudden arrival of a visitor, much less by one who is on the point of marrying one of the ladies of the family," said Musa, as they entered the house together.

"Oh, Aunt Shrewsbury knows all about the colonel's expected visit and what he is coming for. I told her last night. August knows all about it, too. I told him this morning. He referred me to you. And now here we are at your chamber door. You must lie down and take some rest before luncheon. I will send Cassy to you," said Kate, as she left Musa at her room door.

Notwithstanding Kate's prohibition, some preparations were made to receive the old bridegroom. And the next day, when the hour of his arrival approached, the carriage was sent to meet him at the Raven Inn, Eyrie.

Even Musa, for the first time since her illness, announced her intention to sit up and spend the evening with the family in the drawing-room.

She put on an evening dress of white crape, trimmed with black ribbons. This was all the mourning she dared to wear in memory of her lost darling.

When Old Harry arrived, he came in like a hurricane, not of wrath but of boisterous delight. Mr. Carew came out from the library on the opposite side of the hall to welcome him.

"How do you do? How do you do? So glad to get here at last! So glad to hear from your servants that Cousin Musa is better! Fine place this of yours! Never saw it before!" exclaimed Old Harry, impetuously shaking hands with his host before the latter could utter one word of salutation.

"Will you walk into the drawing-room, or would you rather go up to your own room first?" hospitably inquired August.

"Oh, my dear fellow, up to my own room first! And please send my boy Sim with my valise after me. I am spattered all over with mud, and shall not be presentable to the ladies until I have changed my dress," exclaimed the old bridegroom expectant.

"Then I will show you the way. Follow me, if you please, colonel. Come, boy."

Half an hour later the Old Harry came down, transfigured into an old dandy, in black swallow-tailed coat, lavender pants, lavender necktie, lavender gloves and fine linen, with his fiery-red shock of hair and beard, trimmed, oiled and brushed into civilization and decorum, and—if you will believe me—a bunch of white violets in his buttonhole.

The ladies in the drawing-room arose to receive this elegant apparition, scarcely recognizing it as the Old Harry.

"How do you do, Cousin Musa? So glad to see you looking so well after your illness. Fine old place this of yours, my dear. Good-evening, Mrs. Shrewsbury. Bygones are bygones between you and me, eh? Yes! Well, fine old place this of our young friends, eh? How are you, Cousin Kate? You are looking remarkably

well, my beautiful cousin. Fine old place this of your son's and daughter's, eh? Hope they, and their children after them, will live long to enjoy it, eh?" exclaimed the Old Harry, storming on without waiting for any one to answer a question or an exclamation.

"Will you take a seat, colonel?" inquired Mr. Carew, drawing a large armchair forward.

"Thank you, sir," said the Old Harry, as he sat down. "Magnificent old place this of yours!"

Every one for whom these iterated praises were uttered knew well what they meant—that the old man wished to let them know distinctly he had not come to take possession of his property, and did not mean at any time, or under any circumstances, to set up any claim to it.

"I am very glad you like Raven Rocks so well, colonel. And I quite agree with you in your opinion of it," answered August Carew.

At this moment the old-fashioned folding-doors were thrown open, and Pendragon, in his capacity of butler, announced supper in the old-time phrase: "Madam is served."

Old Harry was on his very best behavior. Not even for love would he forget etiquette. So he arose, bowed and gave his arm to his hostess, to take her in to supper. Mr. Carew followed with Mrs. Shrewsbury. And Kate walked on independently, unescorted. Love had not hurt the old man's appetite. He did more than justice to the good things set before him.

After supper the party returned to the drawing-room, where they sat for half-an-hour listening to Old Harry's account of his journey.

And then, as the young hostess was not yet fully recovered, and as the traveler showed signs of fatigue, Kate took the responsibility of breaking up the party.

On the evening of the next day Mr. Lyttleton Locke arrived from Washington City. And on the following day, being Saturday, the three gentlemen—Colonel Carew, Mr. Carew and Mr. Locke—spent the forenoon in the library, in consultation over certain deeds and other documents.

But when the question of transferring the Raven Rocks

estate to its legal proprietor came, Old Harry jumped up and stormed. He swore by all the demons in and out of an unmentionable place that he would never say, or do, or sign, or seal anything whatever—no, and he wouldn't have anything served on him, he wouldn't accept anything signed and sealed by any one else, that went to put old Peter Carew's daughter and son-in-law off of old Peter Carew's estate! And he called down all unmentionable maledictions on his head and his eyes and his life and his soul, if he did. And he swore by multitudinous fiends that he considered the proposition an insult to his integrity. And he clasped his hands firmly behind his back lest somebody should force some deed into them, and put him in possession of Raven Rocks, whether he would or no.

"But, my good sir," said the lawyer, "all this is perfectly gratuitous. Nothing need be 'signed, sealed and delivered,' as you are pleased to call it, to give you Raven Rocks. It is yours already, whether you claim it or not."

"I will never claim it so long as I live!" said Old Harry, with a terrible oath.

"Then, of course, you can leave our young friends in possession as long as you live," acquiesced the lawyer.

"And who will have the right or the power to take it away from them after I am gone? That's what I want to know?" bawled Old Harry.

"The heir-at-law, whoever he may prove to be," very coolly replied the old lawyer.

"Set fire to him, whoever he may be!" hotly exclaimed the Old Harry. "But I don't believe there's any such a person. There!"

"Pardon me, Colonel Carew," said August, gravely, "but there is such a person. And the time has now come when I must speak of him. Your son, Harold——"

"Ah! the poor, self-willed fellow!" interrupted the old man, with much emotion. "You are thinking of him, are you? Dead a dozen years ago, sir! Dead a dozen years ago, or else he would have answered some one of the many advertisements I had put in the papers inviting him to come home. You may put him out of your calculations, sir. He'll never come back to this world to deprive you of Raven Rocks. Dead a dozen years ago, sir. Dead a

dozen years ago or more!" added the bereaved father, with a deep sigh.

Mr. Carew and Mr. Locke were both so touched by this betrayal of feeling on the part of Old Harry that they kept silence for a while. But the impetuous old man soon recommenced:

"Ah, poor boy! poor boy! That temper of his was his ruin, sir!—that self-willed, headstrong, violent and ungovernable temper of his! I can't think where he got that temper from, I'm sure. Certainly not from me. But, there! He is dead and gone now, poor fellow! And there's an end of him!" he added, vigorously wiping his face with his pocket handkerchief.

"It is true," said August, solemnly. "Young Harold Carew died years ago, before he saw one of your advertisements inviting him to return home. But—he left a widow and a child. And the future heir of Raven Rocks lives in your grandson, Colonel Carew."

CHAPTER XIV.

A STRANGER.

"I say that the future heir of Raven Rocks survives in your grandson, Colonel Carew," repeated August, seeing that the old man only sat and stared stupidly in his face, as if he had not comprehended what had been said.

"Eh? What! Lord bless my soul alive!" exclaimed the Old Harry, breaking out of his stupor. "Where is the boy? How did you find this out? How long have you known it? Can you prove it? Why didn't you let me know before? Gracious Heaven, man! why didn't you tell me all this years ago? Where has the boy been all this time? Is his mother living? What sort of a woman is she? Where do they live? What are their circumstances? Are they in want? When can I see the lad? How old is he? How has he been brought up? Heaven and earth, man! why don't you answer?" fiercely demanded Old Harry, after pouring forth a torrent of questions in his usual impetuous way, until he had to stop for want of breath.

"I will tell you all that I know at once, Colonel Carew, and I should have done so before if you had given me an opportunity," said August.

"Go on, sir! Go on! Thunder and lightning, why don't you go on!"

"I am going," said August, smiling at the old man's vehement impatience. "I discovered the existence of your grandson but a few weeks ago, and by the merest accident."

"Providence, sir! Special Providence, sir! Go on," interrupted Colonel Carew.

"Providence, then. I stand corrected," smiled August, "His mother is a good woman, the wife now of the Rev. Mr. Wilks, a Methodist preacher."

"The jade! to marry a second time and put a step-father over my grandson!" exclaimed Old Harry, very consistently with his own matrimonial proceedings, past and present.

"They live at Inwood-on-the-Hudson, and are in moderate circumstances," continued Mr. Carew, heedless of the interruption.

"But the boy, sir! the boy! let us hear about the boy! Who the deuce cares about the woman and the parson!" exclaimed Old Harry.

"The boy is a healthy, intelligent lad, very much like the Carews in person and in character; with a strong will of his own."

"Never was a Carew without one, sir! Never!"

"He is between ten and twelve years of age; and, like his father before him, he has run away to sea."

"'Run away to sea!' Lord bless my soul alive! 'run away to sea!' He, too!" burst forth Old Harry, starting from his chair, and beginning to trot up and down the floor, and wipe the beading perspiration from his face.

"I do not think you need to distress yourself on that account, sir," said Mr. Carew, soothingly.

"In the name of Heaven, then, where, where, where is the lad? How can he be reached?" exclaimed the old man, stopping in his vehement walk and standing before the last speaker.

"He is probably safe and in good hands. He is known to have sailed with Captain Orr, of the merchant ship

Banshee, trading between New York and Liverpool. Captain Orr is known to the boy's mother as a just and kind man, a friend of the boy's father, who sailed as second mate on the *Banshee* for several years. The *Banshee* sailed from New York about two months ago, and is probably now near port, on her homeward-bound voyage," Mr. Carew explained.

Old Harry wiped his red and steaming face again and exclaimed:

"I must go to New York immediately to look up my grandson, the heir of Pirate's Peak. I will take Kate to New York for our wedding trip, and wait there until the —the—the what's-its-name—the *Banshee* comes in, and then I'll take the lad and fetch him home."

"You'll go to Inwood and see his mother, I suppose?" said Mr. Carew.

"Well, yes, I suppose I must, though don't care about the jade—to go and marry a second time, and put a step-father over my grandson! What do you say the fellow's name was she went and married—Weeks?—Peake?—what was it?"

"Wilks—the Rev. Mr. Wilks, a Methodist preacher."

"I know him—a meddlesome ourang outang—tried to make mischief between me and Cousin Kate before I ever saw her face, with a cock-and-bull story, enough to make your hair stand on end. I know him! Set fire to him! No wonder the boy ran away to sea. I would have done the same thing myself," growled Old Harry. "And now, sir, of course you have proofs of what you have told me."

"Certainly; I brought them with me from New York. I will give them to you immediately," said Mr. Carew, as he arose and unlocked a drawer in the library table, and drew from it a parcel which he handed to Colonel Carew.

"And now let all else go by for the present. I don't care a copper cent what becomes of Raven Rocks, but I do care for my grandson; and I want to look over these documents alone at my leisure, and in my own room. So if you will excuse me, gentlemen, I will go."

Old Harry shut himself up in his room, until he had read all the letters and other documents relating to the case of his grandson, and had stared at all the photo-

graphs to his eyes' content, and had satisfied himself as to the genuineness and authenticity of the whole mass of proofs, and then he came out and went in search of his betrothed. He found her in the sitting-room, where, as soon as he was seated, he burst forth with the whole truth.

"I have just found out that I have got a living grandson, Kate, the son of my poor willful Harry who ran away to sea so many years ago. He married and died, leaving a widow and one child, my grandson, who will be the heir of Pirate's Peak. I thought it right to tell you so, Kate, and to tell you, also, that your prospects shall not be injured by the unexpected circumstance of my grandson's existence. Pirate's Peak is not entailed as Raven Rocks, unfortunately is. So you shall be richly provided for, my love, and shall have a life's interest in Pirate's Peak after my decease."

"Don't talk about your decease, my dear old lion. But tell me about the boy. Where is he?" inquired the widow.

"On board of a ship, expected every day to land at New York. And if it is agreeable to you, my dear, instead of going South for our wedding trip, we will go North and fetch home the boy. What do you say?"

"I would prefer going North under any circumstances and very much prefer it under these," answered the lady.

"Thank you, Kate."

And so the matter was settled.

The wedding was a very quiet one. There was no display in dress.

Kate was married in a neat traveling suit of gray Irish poplin, trimmed with velvet of the same quiet shade, and a bonnet of silver-gray silk, with a gray ostrich tip and a single tea rose, and white gloves.

Mrs. August Carew wore a black silk, half covered with a fine white thread-lace shawl, a white rose in her dark hair, and white gloves.

Mrs. Shrewsbury wore a black satin dress, black lace shawl, point-lace cap and lavender gloves. Mrs. Rollins, a friend from Eyrie, wore a mauve silk walking suit, with bonnet and gloves to match.

The bridegroom wore the regulation dress in such cases made and provided.

After an elegant little breakfast, at which the officiating clergyman, his wife, and the family solicitor, were the only guests, the newly-married pair bade adieu to their friends, and entered the carriage that had been ordered to convey them to Eyrie, to meet the coach that was to take them the first stage on their journey northward.

On the following day, Mrs. Shrewsbury left Raven Rocks for The Shoals, to attend her daughter Clarice. Mr. Lyttleton Locke escorted the old lady as far as Washington, where she took the steamer for the Chesapeake Bay.

Mr. and Mrs. August Carew remained at Raven Rocks for some weeks longer, in order to settle up their business there before leaving the place. For August had determined, notwithstanding all Colonel Carew had said to the contrary, that he would give up Raven Rocks. And he therefore made arrangements with the land steward, Bullock, to receive all the revenues of the estate and pay them over to Mr. Lyttleton Locke, who was to put them into bank to the credit of Colonel Harold Carew, of Pirate's Peak.

They had in all this time heard nothing more of the wreck. The waters of forgetfulness had seemed to close over the tragedy as the waves of the ocean had closed over the sunken ship.

Mr. Carew had written to the detective at Liverpool, recalling him and Mrs. Wilks from their vain waiting there.

Musa received long and frequent letters from Kate. The newly-married pair were in New York, waiting for the arrival of the *Banshee,* which was daily expected. From New York they intended to come down to Pirate's Peak.

At length, about the first of May, all their work at Raven Rocks being done, Mr. and Mrs. Carew, accompanied by their servants, Cornwallis and Cassy, left for Washington *en route* for Bay Beauty.

The bright little bay, the Isle of Roses on its bosom, the verdant banks around it, the wooded hill and vine-clad villa at its head, were all as beautiful as the floral

month of May could make them. There at Cape Welcome a surprise awaited them.

Commodore Howard, Mrs. Shrewsbury, Colonel Carew and Kate stood on the pier to meet them.

"This is indeed a very unexpected pleasure," said August, as he shook hands right and left in response to their cordial greetings.

"Why, I am surprised and delighted to meet you here, Kate—dear Kate!" said Musa, as soon as she had shaken hands with the elder members of this receiving committee.

"We have been here three days, my darling," answered Mrs. Carew.

"But when I received a letter from you just before I left Raven Rocks, you were still in New York, awaiting the arrival of the *Banshee,* with little Sam on board. She arrived, of course? But the boy—did you bring the boy back with you?" inquired Musa, as they all walked up the avenue, between rows of fragrant, flowering almond trees.

"The *Banshee* came in six days since, dear, but the boy was not on board of her. It seems that he had shipped only for the voyage out, and he left the ship at Liverpool," said Kate.

"The little vagabond!" burst forth the Old Harry, "to give me all this trouble! But I have sent an officer over after him in the steamer that sailed Saturday. The little outlaw! I'll train him once I get hold of him! I'll learn him how to run away!"

"Come here, my dear, I have got something to tell you," said Mrs. Shrewsbury, drawing Musa's arm within her own, and dropping a little behind the party, so that they could be *tête-à-tête.*

"And I have got something to ask you, dear Mrs. Shrewsbury. How is Clarice?" whispered Musa.

"Oh, she is doing finely! And—congratulate me, my dear. I am a grandfather."

"A grandfather!" burst forth Musa, in amazement.

"Oh, I mean a grandmother. But it is a boy, a very fine boy, indeed. Just one week old to-day. And that's how I made the slip of the tongue," the old lady explained,

"I am so glad! I do congratulate you, very sincerely indeed. And my dear Clarice! She is doing well, you say?"

"She is doing finely. And the baby is a noble boy. And she means to name him after you."

"To name him after me!"

"Yes, my dear, for she adores you. There is not a creature living who loves you more devotedly than Clarice does."

"I know she does, dear child. But—name a boy after me!"

"Yes, my dear. If it had been a girl she would have called her Musa. But as it is a boy she will call him Percy—Percy Howard. It will be a very pretty name."

"Yes, a very pretty name," said Musa, with an involuntary sigh.

"And she wants you and Mr. Carew to stand sponsors for the boy when he is christened. And she is very anxious to see you. I hope you will go over to see her as soon as possible."

"I will go over to-morrow morning, dear Mrs. Shrewsbury."

"Thank you, my love. Well, here we are at the house."

The house looked very bright and cheerful. The evening lamps were lighted, though it was quite early. The doors and windows were all open, and the light from within streamed out upon the beautiful piazza.

Musa found her trunks and boxes already in her room, under the charge of Cassy. She changed her traveling suit for an evening dress of fine India muslin, trimmed with black ribbon; put a white rose in her dark hair, and went below to join her friends.

After supper the party adjourned to the piazza, to enjoy the lovely starlight night upon the waters.

There was a late moon, and the visitors waited for it to rise, that they might have its light upon the bay as they went home in their boats. At ten o'clock the moon arose over the waters, clear, serene and majestic.

The visitors prepared for the departure, and, notwithstanding the urgent entreaty of their host and hostess

that they should remain for the night, they pleaded necessity and left the house.

Early the next morning Musa came out upon the piazza and looked upon the scene, all-glorious in the light of the newly-risen sun; her spirit expanded in joy and in worship for a moment, and then, quickly as the coming of a summer shower, she burst into tears.

"Oh, my little Musette! Oh, my lost child! How happy you would have been here! How happy you would have made us!" she exclaimed, as she dropped into one of the rustic seats, and abandoned herself to the storm of grief that swept over her soul, thankful that for once she could weep unobserved and unrestrained—thankful that her husband had gone on a tour of inspection through the place, and would not be back until breakfast time.

When the tempest had subsided and left her calmer, she went down among the parterres of flowers below the house and gathered a bouquet of scarlet geraniums, heart's-ease, heliotrope, cape jessamine, clove pinks, tuberoses and other beautiful and fragrant flowers, and brought them in and put them in a vase and set them on the breakfast-table.

August came in bright, healthy and hungry from his morning ride. Musa rang for breakfast, and they sat down at the table.

"When we met here a year ago, August, I welcomed you to my house; now you must welcome me to yours," said Musa, with a smile.

"What is this, my darling, about 'mine' and 'yours,' 'yours' and 'mine?' There are no such pronouns for us —only ours," said August, heartily.

"I promised to go down and see Clarice and her baby this morning. Can you take me in the sailboat, August?" she next asked.

"Of course; I have already ordered the boat. So if you have got through breakfast, my love, you may go and put on your hat," said August.

Musa rang the bell for a servant to come and clear away, and then she arose and went upstairs to get ready for her sail. She soon returned, wearing a broad-

brimmed straw hat and a white beaver-cloth sack, and doeskin gauntlets.

An hour's delightful sail brought them to the low, sandy beach known as The Shoals, above which, on a gently-undulated green lawn, shaded with acacia trees, stood the old-fashioned homestead of the Howards, with its tall chimneys at each gable-end, its steep roof and its long front piazzas, above and below.

Captain Howard was on the piazza, and he came down to welcome the morning visitors.

"I wish you much joy of your young son, Captain," said Mr. Carew, cordially shaking his hand, when the first formal greetings were over.

Horace Howard murmured some polite, but rather inarticulate expressions of acknowledgment.

He looked very happy but very much embarrassed, for he was a young father, and not yet quite accustomed to his paternal honors.

But he invited his visitors into the parlor, where Mrs. Shrewsbury received them very cordially.

"Come up and see Clarice. She is so anxiously expecting you," said Mrs. Shrewsbury to Musa, as she led the way to Clarice's room.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you, Musa! my own dear Queen Musa! How long it has been since we met!" sobbed Clarice, kissing her friends amid tears of delight.

"Yes, it has been nearly five months, dear," said Musa, returning her caresses. "And now let me see the little 'crown prince.' Who is he like?" inquired Musa, bending over the miniature man.

"He is like no one but his angel self. What young baby, just seven days from heaven, ever was really like father or mother, or any earthly sinner?" said Clarice, as she uncovered her treasure to the admiring eyes of her friend.

Musa lavished praises without measure upon this small pearl of great price. And then, in the midst of her half-jesting flatteries, she suddenly became very grave. Tears filled her eyes as she said, seriously:

"Oh, take care of him, Clarice! Guard his life as you never guarded your own! For of all the heart-break-

ing sorrows in this world, the loss of a child is the greatest, except those which come from sin."

"Indeed I will take care of him, bless him!" said the young mother, earnestly, as she bent and kissed her child. "But what makes you talk so, dear Musa? Indeed you alarm me! Do you think he looks delicate?" she anxiously inquired.

"No, love, no! he looks fine and strong, and likely to live to be a handsome old man of sixty, when you are a lovely little old lady of eighty," said Musa, cheerfully.

And then, to turn the conversation, she inquired:

"Do you know anything about Armida Sutton, Clarice? It has been four months since I heard from her."

"Armida! Why, don't you know what has become of her, Musa?" inquired Clarice, in surprise.

"No, dear. As I told you before, I have not heard from her for months."

"Well, then, she has run off to Europe with that Prussian count, Von Ernheim."

"What!" exclaimed Musa, in amazement.

"Don't you remember that dandy demon, Count Von Ernheim, who was an attaché to the Prussian embassy, and used to come to our receptions at Vermont avenue, where Armida used to flirt with him in her cold, stately manner?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, he is the man. He was recalled by his government, or dismissed by his chief, or something. At all events, he went back to Europe and took Armida with him. Some say as his wife, some say as his traveling companion."

"Gracious Heaven, Clarice! How do you know? Who told you?"

"Mollie Seymour. You remember her? She was one of your 'Maries' at the masked ball. And I have corresponded with her ever since I left Washington."

"But Armida's poor mother! What about her?" anxiously inquired Musa.

"Mollie Seymour, good little girl that she is, went out to see Mrs. Sutton, after the elopement. She found her in poor health and deep destitution, yet withal, quite reconciled to being deserted, and quite proud of her

daughter's being a countess, as the poor woman firmly believed her to be."

"And as she probably is," said Musa. "Armida Sutton is not too pure and good, but she is far too cold and selfish to sacrifice herself for love."

"Well, at all events, she has gone and left her mother alone in poverty and sickness," said Clarice.

"My poor foster-mother! I must write to her and send relief this very day. And I will ask her to come down here and live with me. She can rent out or sell her wretched little farm, which in her hands has never paid expenses," said Musa.

Then, thinking that she had stayed as long with Clarice as prudence dictated, she arose and kissed her good-by, promising to come again in a few days.

As soon as Musa reached home, she sat down and wrote an affectionate letter to Mrs. Sutton, pressing her to come down to Bay Beauty, and inclosing a check to meet her expenses. This kind letter was answered sooner than Musa could have hoped, by the appearance of Mrs. Sutton in person.

She arrived by the morning boat, about the middle of May. She looked pale and emaciated, but by no means depressed. She told Musa that she had rented out her farm, and would be glad to remain at Bay Beauty as housekeeper until she would hear from her daughter. Musa kissed her in silence. She could make no comment on this speech.

But, to Musa's surprise, in a few days after the arrival of Mrs. Sutton at Bay Beauty, a foreign letter arrived for her that had been forwarded from Rockville by the tenant of Harewood. It was a letter from her daughter, inclosing a bill of exchange for a considerable sum of money, and signed Armida Von Ernheim. The poor forsaken mother was delighted and grieved at the same time, and she expressed these mixed sentiments when she said to Musa:

"You see, my dear lady, it is a great match my daughter has made. But, of course, it separates her from me. My education has not fitted me to move in the high circle that she will adorn."

So Mrs. Sutton remained with Musa as the housekeeper at Bay Beauty.

Pretty Clarice Howard was soon able to leave her room. And the first visit that she made was to her best-beloved friend Musa.

The summer and autumn passed pleasantly to the colony of friends on the bayside. The life there was calm and beautiful, and would have been delightful to Musa but for one drawback. Musa deeply and secretly mourned her child, and could not be comforted, even by the prospect of being the mother of another one.

When the time approached at which they should have migrated to Washington for the fashionable season, Musa pleaded to be allowed to spend the winter at Bay Beauty. With the memory of her lost child in her heart, she could not endure the thought of entering upon a season of fashionable gayety and dissipation. And Mr. Carew, who would not at that time refuse her anything, consented to remain at Bay Beauty.

The winter passed away, and spring came again, reviving the life and beauty of all nature, and teaching again the glorious lesson of the resurrection. And on one beautiful morning in May, as Musa lay faint and white after a night of suffering, another lovely infant girl was laid upon her bosom—a golden-haired, azure-eyed, lily-fair Percie.

Musa clasped it to her heart, kissed it and blessed it, and then suddenly covered her face with both hands and burst into tears and sobs, moaning:

"Oh, my child! my child! Oh, my meek darling! my first born! my little lost Musette!"

CHAPTER XV.

LITTLE MUSETTE.

We must follow the fortunes of the child, Musette.

Perhaps there was something to palliate, though not to excuse, the act of Mary Morris, in abducting, for love, the little daughter of Musa Percie.

Mary Morris was of English parentage, and had been

an orphan from her early childhood. She had been brought up by an uncle and aunt, who, being blessed with but few shillings and many children, had but little, either of money or of love, to bestow on their orphan niece. They kept a little alehouse in a narrow street down near the docks at Liverpool, and frequented by sailors. It was there Mary grew up and became a barmaid.

And there she first met Richard Morris, the American sailor, whom she eventually married. It was a sudden marriage between two impulsive young people, inspired by some mutual liking, but by no deep or permanent affection.

When Richard's ship, the United States sloop of war *Plymouth,* was ordered home, his young wife followed him to New York in the emigrant ship *Liberator.*

But Dick never remained longer in port than he could help. He was a "natural-born" sailor, and the sea was his first and last and only real love.

So when the *Plymouth* was paid off, the term of his enlistment being out, he shipped himself on board the United States frigate *Independence,* bound for the Cape of Good Hope and the East Coast of Africa.

Then he generously gave his young wife the whole of his money, tenderly kissed her good-by, and gayly left her alone in a strange land, and within a few weeks of her expected confinement.

Mary Morris cried a good deal for the first few hours, and then consoled herself by going out shopping and spending money rather recklessly.

Her baby came in due time, a little boy, who only breathed the air of this world and then passed away. Mary Morris cried a great deal more over this disappointment than she did over the departure of her husband. She was a simple-minded, affectionate creature, a Christian in faith if not always in practice, and she knew her baby was in heaven, and she thought she could be reconciled if she only had another baby.

It was then that Mrs. Duff, the good woman with whom she boarded, advised her to seek a situation as wet-nurse. Seeing Musa Percie's carefully-disguised advertisement, she answered it in person, and was engaged, as has been

related, to take charge of the little Musette, then but a few weeks old.

She took the lovely babe to her bosom and to her heart, and soon lavished upon it all the idolatrous love that she would have bestowed upon her own child, and infinitely more than she had ever given to any other creature, even to her handsome, careless, sailor bridegroom.

And little Musette soon gave love for love without measure, "heaped up and overflowing." And the beautiful babe and her blooming nurse became, in household phrase, "all the world to one another."

And when a year had passed away, and the time approached when the little Musette must be weaned, the young nurse became painfully alarmed lest the babe should be taken from her. So great was her anxiety on this subject that it forced her to speak of it to the child's mother.

And then it was that Musa, sympathizing with poor Mollie's feelings, gave her the rash promise that the child whom she had nourished at her own bosom, and whom she loved so devotedly, should never be separated from her, but that wherever little Musette should be taken, Mollie Morris should go, if she should choose to do so, either as her nurse or as her maid.

This promise Musa had really and literally forgotten, almost as soon as it was given. But Mary Morris remembered it distinctly, and trusted to it implicitly.

And so when, one Saturday morning, early in January, she was called into the small parlor and informed by Mrs. Wilks that the little Musette's mother was just married to a gentleman named Carew, and that the pair were going to Europe by the next Saturday's steamer, and intended to take the young child with them and leave her nurse behind, Mollie's rage, grief and despair were boundless.

In vain Mrs. Wilks reasoned with her, reminding her that the child belonged not to her, but to the mother.

Mollie's tears "turned to sparks of fire" as she answered that bringing an unwelcome babe into the world against her will didn't make a mother—that love and care and nursing and devotion made a mother, and that she herself, Mollie Morris, had been "a million times more of a mother to the half-forsaken babe than its real mother had ever been."

And that night Mollie first conceived the idea of abducting the child.

"It almost broke my poor heart whenever she would come and take my baby away from me for a night, and I know it will kill me dead if she takes her away forever. Forever, forever! Oh!" and with the word she fell into strong hysterics, and had them all to herself.

Mollie came out of this fit with the resolution to run away with the baby. She at once began to make preparations for flight, and carried out her plans with consummate skill. She fled to Boston, as a preliminary movement to going to England. She wanted to put the broad ocean between herself and any chance of discovery. She meant to go back to Liverpool, to the little alehouse kept by her aunt and uncle, and resume her old place as barmaid there until she should meet her husband again. She meant to tell her relations, and her husband also, in case she should ever meet him, that Musette was her own child—the child that she had been expecting when he left her to go on that African cruise. And as the child's age corresponded with that of the one she had lost, her story would be plausible enough to be accepted without the least suspicion. No one could contradict her, and so the beautiful child should be hers forever.

It was on the morning of the 20th of January that Mollie, in looking over the shipping news of a paper, saw that the bark *Fairy*, Captain Lloyd, was appointed to sail for Liverpool on the 26th. She immediately went down to the agent and engaged passage. On the morning that the vessel was to sail, Mollie went down to the pier where the *Fairy* lay, and went on board in the midst of the great bustle that always attends the clearing.

She thought she would not go below to her berth until the ship was off. She was interested in the busy scene on deck, and, besides, she now felt comparatively safe.

She felt that she had covered all her tracks so that she never could be traced and pursued. And though her conscience troubled her a little, she stifled it and triumphed in what she supposed to be her secure possession of the child. At length the last freight was taken on and stowed away in the hold, and the hatches were fastened down.

The officers and crew were preparing to make sail. And

friends who had come to see passengers off were taking their last leave. Hasty kisses were given, hasty last words spoken, and a great crowd moved toward the gangplank; and Mollie was rejoicing in the immediate prospect of getting off to sea, when she felt a hand laid upon her shoulder, and heard a voice say close to her ear:

"Why, Mary Morris! Is it yourself, lass?"

Mollie started, looked up, and turned deadly white with terror. There before her stood the most intimate acquaintance she had in New York, outside of the Brown Cottage —Mrs. Duff, the woman with whom she had lived previous to engaging as the nurse of Musa Percie's child.

Mrs. Duff had visited Mollie frequently, both at Harlem and at Inwood, and was consequently perfectly well acquainted both with the nurse and the child. Mollie was so panic-stricken at the sight of this woman that she could not speak nor take her eyes from the face.

"Why, Mary, lass, what's the matter with you? What makes you glare at me as if I was a ghost? And what are you doing here with that child? And, oh, to be sure! Don't you know as there's a reward——"

"All ashore!" bawled a peremptory voice from the poop.

"Good Lord alive! I shall be carried away!" cried Mrs. Duff, in alarm, suddenly breaking off from her newfound acquaintance, and hurrying to the side of the ship, and rushing on to the pier just a second before the gangplank was withdrawn.

She stood panting on the pier. And before she could recover her breath, the sails filled, and the doomed ship glided away to sea.

Mrs. Duff remained on the pier, gazing after the ship until it was out of sight.

"To think of my coming across Mary Morris and the child on the deck of the *Fairy* this morning! And she been advertised for, with such a reward offered, for the last month or more! If I'd been a little sooner, I might a had her stopped and made my own fortune. Anyway, I can give information now and get something handsome, if not the whole reward. Lor', how lucky I went on board to see my nevvy and his wife off to the the old country! Now I'll go right away and find out

all I can about her, and then I'll go back to York and get the money. My duty, too! A thieving jade! to go and carry off her missis' child! I wonder what she thinks she's gwine to do with it, now she's got it?"

So cogitating, Mrs. Duff turned away from the pier and bent her steps toward the agent's office, and asked to look at the list of passengers who had gone out.

The obliging agent showed it to her, but there was no such name in it as Mary Morris.

"She's gone under some other name, as I might a known she would, but she's gone," said Mrs. Duff, to herself, as she thanked the agent and left the office.

She went down to New York by the night's train. And the next morning she put herself in communication with the advertisers, or rather with their representatives, Messrs. Wilks and Ferret. She received half the reward down, with the promise of the other half as soon as Mary Morris and Musette should be actually recovered.

And on the next day Detective Ferret and Mrs. Wilks, after communicating the facts to Mr. and Mrs. Carew by letter, embarked on the *Darien* for Liverpool, to intercept the *Fairy* and recover the child, as has been already told.

Mary Morris remained panic-stricken on the deck where she had been so suddenly discovered and so abruptly left by Mrs. Duff. Paralyzed by the sense of peril she had just passed through, she sat staring stupidly at the receding piers crowded with people, among whom she saw as in a haze the burly form of Mrs. Duff still watching her.

Feeling sure that Mrs. Duff would report the discovery of herself and Musette on board the *Fairy,* Mollie left the vessel at Halifax, although she had paid her passage to Liverpool.

Mollie, under the name of Nelson, and in the character of a widow, took up her abode with Mrs. Martin, another widow, and got as much needlework as she cared to do.

She was in no hurry to leave Halifax. For the present she would rest there, only taking care to leave the city before she could be traced there by her pursuers.

But she had not been more than ten days in the city, nor more than three in her new boarding-house, when terrible news reached Halifax. The bark *Fairy* had foundered in a storm at sea, with two hundred souls on board!

The news had come from New York, whither the half-dozen survivors of the wreck picked up on a raft by the *Mercury* had been carried into port. Mollie saw herself and the child set down in the list of the lost, and thus it came to be firmly believed that the daughter of Musa Percie, with her nurse, was lost in the wreck of the *Fairy*.

A thrill of horror passed through the soul of the woman as she read the account of the disaster, and reflected how narrowly she and the child had escaped perishing with the two hundred victims who went down in the *Fairy* that awful night.

As soon as she recovered from the shock, however, she reflected how perfectly secure she should henceforth be from all chance of pursuit. She and the child were believed to have been lost at sea.

The child's mother would grieve for awhile, but would eventually become resigned. And the nurse would be left in peaceable possession forever.

And Mollie hugged the child to her bosom in a new ardor of love and joy, feeling that now nothing but death could separate them. She would teach little Musette to call her mother, and no one in the world should ever know but that she, Mollie, was really the child's mother. And she would change her name from Musette to Mary.

Mollie had still five hundred dollars left of her savings. This sum she wished to keep intact. So she went to work industriously with her needle to support herself and the child during their sojourn in Halifax.

She remained in Halifax until the first of May, working so well that she was enabled not only to pay her way there, but to save enough to buy her ticket for a second-class passage in an ocean steamer to Liverpool. On the first of May she embarked with the child on board the *Greenland,* traveling under her assumed name of Nelson. After a very pleasant voyage, she arrived with her little charge safe at Liverpool.

Leaving her trunks at the Custom House, she took little Musette by the hand and walked through the network of narrow streets that led her in a zigzag way to the little alehouse in the crowded block that had been the home of her childhood.

No change seemed to have taken place in that locality during the two years of her absence. The same dingy houses flanked the sidewalk. The same quaint swinging sign hung in front of the old building, the Prince's Feathers.

She walked in, leading the child by the hand. Neither her aunt nor her uncle was at the counter. A big, burly, red-faced and red-haired man of about forty years of age was tending the bar. Mary knew him well. He had been head waiter at a hotel near by, and a frequent visitor at her uncle's house. But he did not seem to recognize her.

"Mr. Corbin, don't you know me?" she inquired.

He raised his head and stared at her for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Eh? What? Why, Mary, my lass, is this you?"

"Yes, Mr. Corbin. How is Uncle George and Aunt Jane?"

"They were well when I heard last."

"Where are my aunt and uncle, please, Mr. Corbin?"

The man stared again before he answered.

"To think of your expecting to find them here! Why, lass, they all emigrated to New Zealand, bag and baggage, children, puppies, kittens and canary birds, as much as eighteen months ago."

"To New Zealand!" exclaimed Mary, in amazement.

"Ay, to New Zealand! and a good job, too, with as many children as they had."

"And who keeps this place now?" inquired Mary, uneasily.

"I do. I bought 'em out, house, stock, good-will and all. And a good job for me. A man and his wife can get along where a house full of kids would starve," muttered this landlord, as he served out a pot of porter to a fresh customer.

Then there came a lull in the noise, an interregnum in

the receipt of custom. And for a few minutes the place was left to the landlord and woman and child.

"Come inside the bar and sit down, Mary. You've set here often enough in old times, lass, eh? And tell me, now," he said, as soon as she had accepted his invitation and seated herself and taken the child on her lap, "tell me, Mary, where's your man?"

"He is cruising on the coast of Africa, and won't be home for months. He advised me before he went away to come back here to my uncle and aunt, and stay with them till he came back. But I was so well situated in the States I had no call to come until lately."

"Is that his kid?" inquired the landlord.

"Yes," said Mary, "it is."

"And so you came over expecting to stay with the old 'uns, did you?" inquired the landlord.

"Yes," answered Mary, "but not to live on them. I thought to take my old place as barmaid, and pay for my keep and the child's that way. You know I used to be a great favorite, Mr. Corbin."

"That you were, lass, and drew a deal of custom. The business never prospered so well after you left. And that was partly why George Bean made up his mind to emigrate to New Zealand, and a good job, too, as I said before. Well, lass, and what do you think of doing now, seeing as your people are not here to take you in?" kindly inquired John Corbin.

"I'm sure I don't know. I'm so taken aback. I shall have to take time to turn myself around first," sadly answered the woman.

"Well, now, look here, Mary, you're just the right woman, come to the right place in the right time, if you did but know it. Our barmaid, Ann Kittridge, left us three days ago to seek her fortune in the States. Hope she'll find it, that's all. Well, me and the missus have more than our hands full till we find another girl to suit us. And I don't see where we could find one to suit us better than you—no, nor so well So, my lass, if so be you're agreeable you can step right into your old quarters as nat'rel as if you had never left 'em."

"But the child?" suggested Mary.

"Oh, the kid will be no encumbrance! If there was

more'n one of them, why, to be sure—— But being only one, the missus won't mind. And here she comes now," said the landlord, as the landlady, a plump, rosy, good-humored dame of about forty years, entered the bar.

"Say, Martha, here's Mollie Bean come back from 'Merica to stop with her people. Didn't know, you know, that they'd gone away. I say, she's just in the nick of time to take her old place behind the counter. What do you think of it?" inquired John Corbin, while his wife was shaking hands with Mary and welcoming her back.

"Why, I think if she's willing, it'll be just what we want. Is that your child, Mary?" inquired the landlady.

"There, go into the back parlor and talk to the missus, Mary, and arrange matters with her. And I'll be agreeable. Here comes a lot of customers," said Mr. Corbin, as he hustled the two women and the child good-humoredly out of the barroom.

The result of the interview with the landlady was that Mary Morris was engaged as barmaid at the Prince's Feathers.

Old acquaintanceships, interrupted for two years, were renewed, and old *habitués* of the house returned, and Mary proved as attractive in drawing custom now as she had been before her marriage. And she was quite naturally, under the circumsatnces, called Mollie Bean, as the name by which she had been best known to her neighbors.

Little Musette became the pet of the house. But Mollie told everybody who noticed the child that she was called Mary, after herself; and this was soon shortened into May, and the child soon learned to answer to it.

But she never forgot her own. And when any stranger inquired:

"What is your name, darling?" she always answered: "Muta."

Every one loved her, because, if they would only permit her to do so, she loved every one. It was her nature to love. She had inherited the very best qualities of father and mother. She had inherited all her father's noble disinterestedness and all her mother's impassioned earnestness without that mother's self-willfulness. But

as yet this nature was unconscious, intuitive in the infant's spirit.

With her native self-forgetfulness and tender sympathy and solicitous affection, with her soft caresses and earnest, wistful gaze, and sweet voice in murmuring her one beautiful phrase, "I lo'e you," she won all hearts.

No one, not the most hardened man or the most irritable woman in that rough neighborhood, could speak harshly to this sweet child, who offered love, and only love, to all.

Once only the little one was wounded. Another child, on the same street, a sickly, suffering, peevish little girl, struck Musette in the face.

She stood still in amazement for a moment, and then went up to her little aggressor, and, putting her hand on her head with every expression of sympathy, kissed her and murmured:

"Poor Kitty! Kitty so sick!"

It seemed as if she intuitively felt that nothing but sickness or suffering could have caused such an outbreak of temper.

Many such incidents as that marked the baby's first years of life, and caused the old women of the street to shake their heads and say:

"That child will never live here. Such children never do."

Yet Musette lived, and lived healthfully and happily.

And Mary Bean, as Mrs. Morris was now always called, grew to love and worship the child more and more.

So passed the first year after their arrival in England.

The child was nearly three years old. Nothing had occurred to disturb Mary Morris on accont of Musette.

She had not heard a syllable of or from the bereaved mother or her friends. And as the time passed she grew perfectly confident of security in the possession of the child.

The time drew near when she might expect her husband home. He had enlisted as a common seaman in the United States naval service for three years. And his term of enlistment had nearly expired. She knew that he would return to the United States in his ship. But she

thought that when the ship should be paid off, he would come over to Liverpool to seek her in her own home.

And then she would present little Musette to him as their own child. How proud he would be of the little girl! of her beauty, her intelligence and her goodness!

It was while Mary Morris was indulging in these visions that an event occurred which disarranged all her calculations, and seriously affected the future destiny of little Musette.

One afternoon a man, with a small monkey and an organ, stopped before the house, and began to play while the monkey danced.

This collected a crowd. And a crowd is generally thirsty. So when the man stopped playing, and the monkey ceased to dance and began to carry around his little cap to collect the pennies, half the crowd slipped into the house, preferring to spend their pence in ale.

And Mollie had as much as she could do to serve all these customers. Consequently, she lost sight for a few moments of little Musette, who had gone out and mingled with the crowd, and being so small, had easily slipped through it and got quite up to the spot where the monkey was dancing.

She was so delighted with the fun that she began to laugh and clap her hands with glee.

And when the man stopped playing and the monkey stopped dancing and began to carry around his little cap to collect the pennies, she followed him through the crowd, trying to coax him to take a little cake from her hand.

But "Jocko" was too well trained to neglect the main chance. And he diligently collected tribute money until the lessening crowd had filed into the alehouse or dispersed to their usual haunts, and no one was left but a few little street vagrants. The man strapped his organ to his back and led the monkey by a string and left the spot.

Musette followed, still offering her cake to the monkey, who, at last, snatched it. And then Musette continued to follow, watching him as he ate it.

And so the man, the monkey, half-a-dozen idle boys and girls and little Musette, wandered away from the

neighborhood and down nearer the water-side, where there was much shipping and seemingly an endless forest of masts.

Here the man stopped before the entrance of an underground "saloon," or low drinking cellar, and as a crowd collected, he unstrapped his organ and began to play, while the monkey danced and little Musette laughed and clapped her hands with delight.

And even in that rough crowd of men and women, the beautiful, attractive child divided attention with the music and the monkey.

The organ-grinder quickly perceived this, and so, when he had finished his piece, and started the monkey around with its little red cap to collect the pennies, he took off his own old round hat, and gave it to little Musette, with a sign that she also should follow the monkey and collect the tribute.

And the child, delighted to be of use, toddled around after the monkey, holding up the old hat to every kind-looking face, and pence and half-pence rattled down into it until it was almost too heavy for the little hands to hold. Then the organ-grinder took it from her, and took out the contents by handfuls and transferred them to his pockets.

The man strapped the organ upon his back again and took his monkey by the string. Then he looked around. It was growing quite dark. The street lamps were being lighted, one after the other. And now there was no one near the organ-grinder except little Musette, who had sunk down upon the pavement, quite tired out, where she sat, grasping the leg of the man's trousers, lest he should go and leave her alone.

He looked down at the child with even more attention than he had yet bestowed upon her. She was now over three years of age, and being a large child she looked still older. She was dressed in a pink calico frock and a white apron and white pantalettes.

"Now I wonder where I picked you up?" said the man, aloud. He could not remember where she had started to follow him, although he knew she had been with him for more than two hours. "I do wonder where I did pick you up?" he repeated.

But the child only gazed at him with her wistful, dark eyes, while she sat and held fast to his trousers.

"Here's a go. I s'pose I have to take you home. Vill yer go home long o' me, say?" inquired the man, giving his free hand to the child (the other one was occupied with the monkey).

"'Es," she said, so eagerly that she must have misunderstood him, and supposed that he was offering to take her back to her own home.

He gave her his hand, and she sprang to her feet.

Then, carrying the organ strapped upon his back, and leading the child with his right hand, and the monkey, by a string, with his left, he toiled on toward his humble lodging; and "weary and heavy laden" as he was, he easily accommodated his gait to that of the little, tired child.

The old man's lodgings were humble, and his fare was plain, but he contrived to make Musette comfortable for the night. In the morning he started out on his peregrinations, intending, if possible, to find Musette's residence. But the child became so exhausted that old Barnaby (the organ-grinder) sat down, near the docks, and took her on his lap, where she immediately fell asleep.

Meanwhile, people passed and repassed. Occasionally one would stop an instant and take notice of the old organ-grinder with the sleeping child upon his breast. Presently a lad of about thirteen years of age passed by, throwing a glance at the group.

Then he stopped short, looked again, turned and walked up to the old organ-grinder, stared at the little sleeper, and then suddenly exclaimed:

"Hallo! where did you get that child?"

At the sound of his voice, little Musette awoke, sat up, and gazed at the speaker with her deep, dark, earnest eyes.

The boy impulsively held out his arms, exclaiming:

"Hallo, little Musette! Don't you know Sam? Your own Sam? Won't you come to Sam? Poor Sam!"

"No; she don't know you, and she won't go to you," exclaimed the old organ-grinder, hugging the child close to his bosom.

"Where did you get her?" demanded the boy.

"And who be you, pray, as asks the question so mighty peert?" demanded the old man, in his turn.

"I am Sam Seaforth, a sailor on board the *Honolulu,* just returned from a two years' voyage round Cape Horn. And I ask you again, how you came by that child?"

"Vell, now, how do you know as she is not my own kid?"

Sam Seaforth, for the boy was really our fugitive lad, paused and thought hard and fast for a few moments, and then he answered:

"I know she's not yours, because I know she is mine —my own little foster-sister."

"And vot I vant to know is, vot right you have to say as this is yer little sister as yer haven't seen since she vas a babby?" persisted the organ-grinder.

"I told you she was the same. I know her by—by—by herself. Her name is Musette. And she has got the mark of a small red heart on the palm of her right hand."

"Oh! you might o' seen that since yer been standing here," objected the old man.

"How could I? That hand has been around you, hidden under your arm all the time I have been here, and you know it! Come! I am going to test this matter; for I'm blest if I don't find out all about how you got hold of the child. Baby," he said, softly addressing the child, "what is your name?"

"Muta," answered the little one, who had not ceased to gaze on his face.

"There, I told you so! 'Muta,' that's the nearest she can come to Musette. Now hold out your little hand. Let Sam see your little hand."

She held out her free left hand.

"No, not that one—the other hand."

She drew her right hand from under the arm of the old man, and held it out.

"There! I told you so! There! look at that! a little red heart marked in her right hand—a mother-mark, her nurse used to call it. Do you see it now?" triumphantly

inquired the boy, holding the little palm open under the eyes of the man.

"Yes, I see it now," said old Barnaby, "but I never see it afore."

"That's because you haven't had the child in your hands long. And now, once for all, you have got to tell me how you came by the child, or else I call a policeman," said Sam.

"My lad, yer've got no call to be so wiolent. This young un followed of me and my monkey along of a lot o' kids yesterday. I don't know vere she jined me, and it wasn't until I had stopped for good and all, and this kid was left alone a clinging to my clothes, as I found out as she was lost."

"What are you going to do with her?"

"Vell, I started out this morning to look for her parents; but if so be as yer 'er brother, as yer say, vy ye'll know vere to take 'er, I reckon," said the old man, still suspiciously.

Sam paused for a little while. He really did not know what to say without betraying family secrets. But seeing the old man scrutinizing him with more and more suspicion, he answered, sharply:

"Her foster-brother, I said. My own mother had charge of her from the first and up to the time I went to sea."

"Vere do yer mother live?" doubtfully inquired the organ-grinder.

"She didn't live in this neighborhood when I went to sea, though she may have moved since," discreetly replied Sam.

"Hodd yer don't know vere yer own mother lives," doubtfully commented old Barnaby, shaking his head.

"I tell you I have only just landed this very morning. And my mother may have moved. I know she didn't live anywhere near here when I went away. And now look here, my venerable old prophet, now I have set eyes on that child, I don't intend to lose sight of her. So take up your line of march straight for the house where you took her from. I will go along with you and keep you in sight. And, mind, if I see the least sign of foul play, I'll call a policeman and ask him to take us

three before a magistrate, who will soon find out what is what," said Sam Seaforth, with all the spirit of his grandfather, the Old Harry, inspiring him.

"Good lack, lad! yer needn't be so wicious. 'Tan't likely as I can run away from yer, loaded down as I'd be with the horgan, let alone leading the monkey and the child. And if so be as yer agreeable, you may just shoulder the child yerself and tote 'er, for I reckon as how she's valked enough for one day," said old Barnaby, as he stood Musette upon the pavement, while he took up his organ and strapped it upon his back.

"Come, Musette. Come to Sam. Come to 'Own Sam'—Poor Sam!" pleaded the boy, holding out his arms.

The child suddenly ran into them. And when he lifted her to his bosom, she threw her arms around his neck and laid her head on his shoulder, murmuring:

"I love oo!"

"I wonder if she remembers me, ever so little?" asked Sam of the circumambient air.

It could not tell him. And neither could I. The subject of memory in a little child is a very occult one.

"Go see mammy now?" said little Musette.

"Yes, darling. Go see mammy now," answered the boy.

Sam, with the child in his arms, moved on, following the organ-grinder with the monkey. They went on some distance without stopping. Then the organ-grinder stopped before an old tenement house, with an underground drinking cellar, and said:

"Here vas vere the crowd left her, and I began to look after her. She'd been a following of me long afore that, I know. And now I come to think on 't, I fust noticed of her down by the Prince's Feathers.' Yer know the 'Prince's Feathers?' "

"No, I don't," said Sam.

"Vell, it's a hale 'ouse down nigh the fut of Ship street. There's vere I first took notice on 'er, though in course she might ha' been a following of me long afore that, too. Bless yer, such a lot o' kids was at my heels, how could I tell?"

"Where is the 'Prince's Feathers?' " inquired Sam.

"Over yonder way. Fut o' Ship street. Come, ve'll go there. It's a good piece."

The party soon arrived at the Prince's Feathers.

Mollie had hunted wildly for the child until she swooned with terror and exhaustion. She was then taken home and put to bed, and had just risen to resume her search, when the landlady came running up the stairs, calling out:

"Mollie! Mollie! the child is found. A horgan-grinder and a sailor-boy have brought 'er home."

With a cry of joy Mollie fled past the landlady down to the bar, outside of which stood the organ-grinder, the monkey, the sailor-boy and the child.

"Mammy!" cried little Musette, running toward her with outstretched arms.

"Oh, my darling! my darling! my angel! have I got you again! Oh, thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!" cried Mollie, distracted with joy, as she caught the child to her bosom and covered her with caresses and flooded her with tears.

"I love oo—I love oo," said little Musette, patting Mollie's cheeks soothingly, for she seemed in doubt whether her foster-mother were really rejoicing or grieving.

"Oh, my love! my pet! my sweet, sweet child! I will never let you out of my sight again!" cried Mollie, renewing her caresses. She saw nothing but the child. The organ-grinder and the sailor-boy stood unnoticed.

"I think, Mollie, lass, yer'd do well to say a vord of thanks to them as found the kid, and came out of their vay to fetch her 'ome to you," suggested the landlord.

"Oh, yes! Thank you! thank you very much! I shall never forget your kindness! Here, here, take this! give them this!" she said, as, without looking at the old man or boy, she handed a couple of half-crowns to the landlord, who immediately offered one to the sailor-boy.

"Give 'em both to the old man," said Sam, shortly.

And the landlord put both pieces in old Barnaby's hand, who at once left the house.

Meantime, Mollie, sitting in the big armchair, continued to rock the child backward and forward, weeping and rejoicing over her, while customers were coming in

the bar. Sam Seaforth stood there staring at the woman, but still unnoticed.

"Mollie, lass," whispered the landlord, "don't yer see as yer a-making a show of yerself? Hadn't yer better take the babby in the missus' room till yer've done crying over her?"

"Oh, yes! I wasn't minding!" said Mollie, rising to leave the barroom.

"And what are you waiting for, my lad?" inquired the landlord, not unkindly, of Sam.

"I—I want to speak to that young woman," said the boy, who had been standing still, staring with amazement at Mollie.

"Well! there she goes! follow her," said Mr. Corbin.

Sam stepped after Mollie into the landlady's back parlor, which was at this moment unoccupied.

Mollie sat down on a low chair and took the child on her lap.

Sam Seaforth went and stood before her, and said:

"Mrs. Morris, don't you know me?"

Mollie started violently at the sound of the familiar voice, looked up, and turned deathly pale, as she faintly exclaimed:

"Sam Seaforth! Great Heaven!"

"Why, what's the matter, Mollie? What are you frightened of? One would think you'd seen my ghost instead of me," said the boy.

"I—I didn't expect to see you here," faltered Mollie.

"I reckon you expected to see me about as much as I expected to see you, or little Musette either. Lord! I was so knocked over when I saw the child with the old organ-grinder that I did not know whether I was asleep or awake. Now, I want to know where are they all?"

"Where are who?" faltered Mollie, still staring at him.

"All of them—mother and stepfather, and Musette's mother."

"Oh, they are—they are—they are——" stammered Mollie. And then, without finishing her sentence, she suddenly inquired:

"Where did you come from? How came you here, Sam?"

"Oh, you know I went to sea, didn't you? Well, I came

over here to Liverpool, and then I shipped for the Pacific. I was gone two years. Ship just got in port and paid off her hands this morning. That's the way I'm here. But how came you here? And where are all the others? Are they all here?"

By this time Mollie had made up a story to tell; so she shook her head solemnly, and said:

"Oh, Sam, Sam, it is awful!"

"What is awful? Is anybody dead? Was it a fire, or a shipwreck, or a collision, or what?" demanded the boy, in alarm.

"No, nothing of all that. And nobody's dead. But it was awful, the way they all treated this poor, dear, innocent lamb, who would have been sent to the Foundling if it hadn't been for poor me, Sam," said Mollie.

"Who treated her? What are you talking about, Mrs. Morris? Why, they all seemed to dote on little Musette!" exclaimed the boy, reddening.

"Oh, yes, 'seemed,' and that was all. First her mother went and got married to a proud, jealous gentleman, of the name of Carew. And she was afraid or ashamed to acknowledge her own child. And so she abandoned little Musette."

"But my mother, my poor, dear mother. She didn't desert little Musette?"

"Oh, no, she—she would have kept the child and me, too, to wait on it; but you see, when no more money was sent for Musette, Mr. Wilks turned ugly, and said he wasn't going to support other people's brats, and a woman to wait on 'em besides."

"I'd like to wring his neck for him! I'll do it some of these days yet! Mind if I don't! Go on, Mollie."

"Well, he led poor Mrs. Wilks such a life, what with growling about the expense of keeping the child, and keeping the nurse, and so on, the upshot of it was I had to leave and take the child with me. I had no home in New York, and so I brought her over here to my old home. And here we are. Now, Sam, look here. I have adopted this child for my own. And I want you to keep my secret, and never let on to any of the people here but what she is my child. I don't want anybody to think she is a poor, little, forsaken child, as her mother is ashamed

to own. Will you keep my secret, Sam? I don't want anybody to think as little Musette is a poor——"

"Yes, of course I'll keep the secret, Mollie. I'd do anything for Musette, even to going back home for her. Yes, Mollie, I will go right back in the next steamer. I have got money, and I'll take a steerage passage, and I'll go right back home, and try to find out Musette's mother, for I know she has not deserted the child. She had no reason to be ashamed of her. I know she hadn't!" exclaimed the boy, reddening up like his grandfather, the Old Harry, in the eagerness of his defense. "I could lay my life she hadn't! And I'll go right over to the United States and——"

"Sam! Sam! you'll do nothing of the kind! Listen to me. As soon as you left home, your stepfather advertised you, by name, in all the papers, and offered fifty dollars reward for your apprehension, just as if you had been a runaway negro. And he said, when you were caught, you should be put in the House of Refuge for a year to teach you better. Just think of it," said Mollie, solemnly.

"Advertised me like a thief, did he? Would put me in the House of Refuge, among the juvenile pickpockets, would he? Oh-h-h! won't I settle with him when I meet him, that's all!" exclaimed the boy, panting with excitement.

"Yes, Sam, but you'll have to wait until you are twenty-one to do that. You are under age, Sam, and your mother and your stepfather can do all he has threatened to do, if they catch you. If you wish to be free, you will have to stay over this side of the pond, and keep shady, too. Stay here and help to take care of little Musette, Sam. I dare say as our landlord can find something for you to do about the house," said Mollie, who was frightened at the very thought of the boy's return to New York with her secret in his possession.

"Will you stay here with me, Sam?" she inquired, seeing that he did not answer.

"I don't know. All this has come so suddenly on a fellow. But, Mollie, I know one thing. You oughtn't to keep that child at a public-house. You told me you had saved money. How much money have you got?"

"A matter of a hundred pounds," answered the woman.

"And I have got nearly fifty pounds, and you are welcome to it, if you will do what I propose."

"And what will that be?"

"Well, you see, I feel uneasy here; first, on little Musette's account; next, on my own. This is a dreadful place to bring up a little lady in. She will be hearing all sorts of bad language and seeing all sorts of improper things. And it is dangerous for me; for you may depend old Wilks got a clew to me and found out about me shipping aboard the *Honolulu* for the Pacific Ocean. And he'll remember when she be due on her return, and he'll keep a watch out, and when he hears the ship is in port he'll come or send for me. If it was only a question between him and me, I wouldn't mind. I'd settle him. But he has got the law on his side. I will not resist the law, though I will not submit to him. So I mean to go and lose myself in London until I can get a good berth in an East Indiaman, or something. And before I go to sea again I will write a letter to poor, dear mother, to set her mind at ease, and give it to you to post after I am off."

"Do, Sam. And I'll post it," said Mollie, who had no intention of doing anything of the sort, but rather of suppressing the letter altogether. "And now, Sam," she continued, "you told me——"

"That I would give you all my savings to help to provide for the little lady, if you would do what I propose. Well, it is this—that you take your money and mine and go up to London, and take a house and furnish it, and let lodgings to respectable tenants; that is a quiet, decent way for a poor woman to invest her little money and get an honest living."

"I—I like the plan, Sam. If I wasn't afraid of losing all my money, I'd do it. However, as you said yourself, I'll think of it."

This ended the subject for the time being.

And Mollie "thought of it" to such practical purpose, that she gave warning to her employers, and within a month's time she was settled in London. She had a medium-sized, plainly-furnished house in Wellington street, Strand, with a neatly-written placard of "Apartments to Let" on the door.

Sam Seaforth got a berth in an East Indiaman, bound for Calcutta, and shipped himself for the voyage, almost immediately after Mollie took possession of her new home.

The boy wrote a long, loving letter to his mother, telling her how well he was in body and mind; how fortunate he had been in meeting Mollie Morris and little Musette in Liverpool; how well and thriving they were; how much he loved his mother, and longed to be with her; and how he should certainly come to live with her as soon as he should be of age and independent of Mr. Wilks. And he begged her not to fret either about him or little Musette, although but for Mr. Wilks they never would have been separated from her. He intrusted this letter to Mollie, and begged her to mail it the day after his ship should have sailed.

Mollie read the letter he had written to his mother, and then, not without feelings of remorse, she put it into the fire.

"Oh, how I sin and how I suffer for the sake of keeping you, little Musette!" she sighed, as she lifted the child to her lap.

"I love you," said Musette, putting her hands each side her nurse's face, and putting up her plump lips to kiss away the tears.

Mollie Morris did not prosper in her lodging-house. She had no business talent whatever.

It was three months before she got a lodger, who stayed with her two months, and went away without having paid her a penny.

Another month passed away without a lodger. She began to get into debt, wherever she could get credit, and she ran bills as long as that credit lasted.

Then one by one her best articles of furniture went to auction, and was sold at a sacrifice to procure the daily necessaries of life.

At last, late in November, when little Musette was about five years old, the landlord, seeing the furniture go bit by bit, got alarmed for the two quarters' rent due him, and levied on all her personal effects that the law would allow him to take for debt. The butcher, the baker, and the grocer followed suit. And so it happened that on

little Musett's birthday Mollie Morris found herself and her child homeless and penniless in the street.

"Don't cry, mammy, my dear mammy! I love you. I do love you," said little Musette, with the most tender compassion in every tone, as if she thought indeed that "love was the greatest good in the world," and a balm for every wound.

Mollie had one precious little piece of property that had escaped the hands of the bailiffs, and now stood a temporary bar between her and starvation—it was the little gold watch and chain that had been given her by Musa.

Through all her troubles Mollie had kept this. Lately she had kept it concealed for fear of the bailiffs.

Now she knew the time had come when she must sell or pawn it to procure food and lodging for herself and child that night.

She bent her steps first to a pawnbroker's shop, where, after some suspicious delay on the part of the money-lender, she succeeded in getting an advance of two pounds on a watch and chain worth twenty.

With this money in her pocket she went to a narrow, crowded street, where she knew cheap lodgings were to be let. And by paying a week's rent in advance, she procured a small, poorly-furnished room, on the second floor, directly over a rag and bottle shop.

Here the struggle for life grew harder than it ever had been before. Mollie tried to get work, but every avenue of labor seemed crowded to suffocation in that great city, so that, seek as diligently as she might, Mollie could get but very little.

During the long winter that followed, piece after piece of her clothing that had been saved from the household wreck, was pawned or sold to procure food or fuel.

In March Mollie fell ill. Hunger, cold, disappointment and despair had done their work upon her and laid her low.

And then it was beautiful and piteous to see how the little child of about five and a half years old, tried to be helpful; how she went to the street and gathered waste-paper, rags, sticks, chips, and brought them to the cold grate and tried to make a fire; how she took the little

stumpy straw broom and tried to sweep the hearth; and how she brought tin cups of cold water from the pump —pumped for her by a street boy—and how she wet cotton rags and tried to wash the sick woman's face and hands, murmuring all the while:

"Don't cry, mammy. I love you. Oh, I do love you so much!"

But Mollie got worse. Little Musette grew graver. Her brain was very busy with devices to help her "dear mammy."

She noticed that some little boys and girls swept crossings, and picked up pennies that way. And she knew that pennies would buy bread and tea and sugar for "poor mammy."

So one April day, taking counsel only of her own loving heart, little Musette, while her mammy was sleeping, took the stumpy straw broom with which she had so often tried to sweep her own hearth, and trailing it after her she went downstairs and out of the house to—of all things in the world—to sweep a crossing to earn pennies for her sick mammy.

But the little gamins of the street soon instructed her that she must not poach upon any other sweeper's premises. She must find a crossing for herself.

So she wandered down several streets, around many corners, until she reached Oxford street, where she found an apparently unclaimed crossing.

Here she began to use her little stumpy broom with much zeal, sweeping diligently as she crossed and recrossed the street, and at every stopping she held out her tiny hand to foot-passengers, as she had seen other small crossing-sweepers do.

(Ah! if by any power of clairvoyance, her own mother could have seen her then! Her own mother, who at the very moment was playing with Musette's beautiful, bright, blue-eyed, three-year-old sister, in the earthly paradise of Bay Beauty!)

Many of the street passengers hurried by without even seeing the sad little sweeper. But every one who stopped and met the pathetic gaze of her grave, tender, dark eyes, dropped a penny in the little open palm.

Crowds of vehicles of every description were con-

stantly whirling up and down, until it seemed a miracle, from moment to moment, that this tiny toiler in the turmoil of the street was not run over and instantly killed.

At last, toward the close of the day, when the declining sun, seen through a slight London fog, made the far end of the street look like a gilded sea with the mist upon it, little Musette grew tired, giddy and confused. Her limbs failed, her head swam; the setting sun dazzled her eyes. She wanted to go home and go to sleep on her mammy's bed.

Poor little one! she never doubted but that she could find her way home quite easily; in truth, she never thought of a difficulty.

But she wished to gather "a heap" of pennies for her poor mammy, and so, with a dizzy brain, and dazzled eyes, and tottering limbs, and trembling hands, she tried to sweep through the horrible confusion of carriages and horses coming and going in every direction, until——

Ah, Heaven!

In starting to get out of the way of a heavy van, she fell under the wheels of a cabriolet.

They was a cry of horror; a sudden pulling up of horses; a street commotion.

"Is the child hurt?" cried the occupant of the carriage, springing to the ground.

"She is killed, your grace," gravely replied the groom, who had raised from the ground and now held in his arms the unconscious form of little Musette.

Was the beautiful little body dead? Had the loving little spirit passed out? If so, it was well for her.

Little Musette was already an angel ripe for inmost heaven.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER SOME YEARS.

We must now return to the Chesapeake and to the Carews.

Some events had happened in that circle, which, while they were very significant to their subjects, were of so

little importance to our story that they may be passed over very briefly.

First, then, the two old veterans, Commodore Howard and Colonel Carew, were gathered to their fathers.

Old Harry had previously made a will in favor of his grandson, Samuel Carew, commonly called Sam Seaforth, and appointed Mr. Lyttleton Locke and Mr. August Carew executors. He had also provided handsomely for Kate, who, in addition to her legal "thirds," had a life interest in the old homestead at Pirate's Peak.

It was in the autumn succeeding the departure of the two old men, that August Carew turned his attention to politics.

He served two years in the legislature of his native State, and was then elected a representative of his district in Congress.

And Musa, with her fair little daughter Ethelinde, accompanied her husband to Washington at the meeting of Congress, and, for the first time in five years, occupied her renovated city palace on Vermont avenue and resumed her *rôle* as a leader of fashion.

Musa, as the wife of a rising statesman, was even more courted, fêted, and idolized than she had ever been before as a maiden, a beauty, and an heiress. The slight cloud that had lowered over her girlhood had passed away, leaving her prospects more brilliant than before.

Young, beautiful, wealthy; the beloved wife of a handsome, accomplished, and distinguished man; the adored mother of the fairest child on the face of the earth, she was the envy as well as the admiration of all who knew her.

But was Musa happy? Ah, no!

The memory of her lost child was ever present with her. The image of her meek-eyed darling was ever before her. She believed little Musette to be safe in heaven, but she could scarcely realize it as a truth.

There were times when her longing to clasp the lost little one to her famishing heart became so intolerable in its passion and intensity that she panted to get away from the earth and seek that little Musette in the vast unknown beyond; times when she lay upon her bed at

night with closed eyes, and folded hands, and yearning soul, invoking the spirit of the child to come, if it were possible to do so, and comfort her; and when she prayed to the Lord, if it were His will, so to send her darling to her.

There were seasons in which she grew impatient of her own youth, and of the long years of earthly life that seemed to stretch far away into the future, before she could grow old and pass away to that "mansion not made with hands. eternal in the heavens," where she should find again and clasp to her yearning heart the form of her meek-eyed child.

And yet she loved her friends and companions of the earth, and she adored her husband and their little girl, Ethelinde. Nor was she indifferent to the brilliant position she occupied in society, nor to the splendid political prospects of her husband as a popular and distinguished statesman.

Only—she was like the shepherd in the Bible story, who losing one lamb, left the flock in the wilderness, and went sorrowing after that which was lost. So at times her spirit left all her possessions behind, and went grieving, yearning and searching after the lamb that was lost.

She never spoke of the bitterness of her incurable grief to any one. She did not wish to overshadow any other life with the reflection of her own sorrow. Yet, still it was often perceptible to those who loved her.

Sometimes a wild hope passed through the bereaved mother's heart. Was it not possible that little Musette might have been saved from the shipwreck? Musa had heard and read of some almost miraculous rescues of shipwrecked passengers.

Who could positively say that little Musette might not have been picked up by some ship bound to a distant port, and that she might not be some day heard of?

But this hope was so wild, so improbable, and indeed so terrifying, that Musa would not entertain it.

It was so much more distressing to think of the gentle child adrift in this rough world than to think of her safe in heaven.

Nevertheless, the thought of her possible rescue and

continued existence would come again and again, though it was never welcomed.

Musa had another topic of interest and speculation, Samuel Harold Carew, the fugitive heir of Pirate's Peak.

Mr. Lyttleton Locke and Mr. August Carew, as joint executors of Colonel Carew's will, had never ceased in their efforts to discover the young adventurer. They had kept a good lookout for the return of the *Honolulu* from the Pacific, and had sent a man over in search of the young sailor.

But the messenger only arrived in time to trace Sam to London, and to learn there that he had shipped again, and this time on board of the East Indiaman *Bengal,* bound for the Cape of Good Hope and Calcutta.

That was the last news that had been received of Sam for the last three years.

They were all now watching the shipping news in the English papers for intelligence of the return of the *Bengal,* intending to send another messenger to meet and intercept the absconding young Fortunatus.

It was near the close of this season in Washington that Musa received a piece of news that filled her sad heart with joy. It was the announcement of the approaching marriage of the young Duke of Montcalla to his Welsh cousin, the Lady Gwendolyn Tremontane.

She remembered the name of her old rival, whom the parents of the young Earl of Cressy wished him to marry upon mere family and financial grounds, and whose face the proposed bridegroom declared that he had never once beheld. And she wondered now what that face, which had made Bertie forget her own, was like.

With smiles and tears she carried the English papers in which she had read the news to her husband's study and showed it to him, saying:

"I am so glad! For I know it is a love match. Bertie would never desecrate marriage by entering it from any other motive."

August laughed, and kissed and congratulated her, on behalf of her young friend.

Mr. Carew's political advancement was very rapid for so young a man. A new minister was to be dispatched

to the Court of St. James, and when the good judgment of the Administration selected General ——— to fill that responsible post, Mr. Carew was appointed as his secretary of legation.

August resigned his seat in the House of Representatives and prepared for his voyage to Europe; and, in the last week of April, Mr. and Mrs. Carew, with only two servants—Pendragon and Cassy—took leave of their friends, and went on to New York, preparatory to their voyage to Europe.

While in the city, August and Musa took time to run up to Inwood, and see Mr. and Mrs. Wilks.

They found the worthy couple well and moderately prosperous. Mr. Wilks was earning a modest but sufficient income by teaching a school. Maggie was radiant with delight at a letter that she had just received from her long-absent son, who had got back to Liverpool from his voyage to the Antipodes.

"To think, dear ma'am, as this is the first letter I have received from him since the one he wrote me when he first went away, which was five years ago last January. And this letter is as short as anything. He just says he has landed at Liverpool, and is well, and how he is going to London to see 'them,' and then he'll tell me how 'they' are. Now, who he means, ma'am, I can't tell for the life of me. He writes just like a careless boy," said Maggie, with a puzzled air.

"Have you answered his letter, Maggie?" inquired Mrs. Carew.

"Oh, yes, dear ma'am, and I have told him about his poor dear grandfather's death." (Maggie had changed her tone in speaking of the Old Harry now.) "And I have explained all about the fortune left him, and begged of him to come home. But I doubt he'll come, ma'am. And that makes me so glad you and Mr. Carew are going to London. Perhaps you will see him."

"We shall make it a point to do so," said Mr. Carew. "You are aware that I am his guardian by his grandfather's will."

"Oh, yes, I know you are, sir, and very kind of you, too. And, moreover, the boy sets so much store by Mrs. Carew that if she speaks to him, he will do what-

ever she tells him to, even to coming back home," replied Maggie.

The next day the embassy sailed from New York in the government steamship *Messenger,* which, after a very pleasant voyage of nine days, anchored safely in the Mersey.

The embassy spent but one day in Liverpool, and then proceeded to London, where they arrived on the evening of the twelfth of May, in the very height of the London fashionable season.

One of the first acts of Mr. and Mrs. Carew was to go down to the East India docks and inquire for the *Bengal.* They were informed that the ship was at Gravesend. And to Gravesend they immediately went. The *Bengal* lay at anchor a short distance from the shore, and Mr. Carew hired a rowboat to take himself and wife out to her.

They were received on board by the third mate. Of this man Mr. Carew inquired for Samuel Seaforth, adding at the same time that he himself was the boy's guardian. "Is the lad on board?" inquired Mr. Carew.

"Yes, sir, he is on board. Coxswain! send young Seaforth forward!" said the mate, raising his voice.

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the coxswain, going aft.

"The lad's time is out, sir. And it is by mere chance he is here to-day. After his kit, or something," the mate explained, as Sam Seaforth was seen approaching.

He was now a very handsome lad, about sixteen years old, and tall for his age, with a fine, frank face, lighted up by a pair of bright black eyes, and shaded by silky, curling black hair. As he came up he looked enough like Musa to be her younger brother. He was clothed in the dress of a common seaman, and only distinguishable from others by the dainty cleanliness of his person and attire.

"Mrs. White!" exclaimed the lad, in a tone of delight, as he instantly recognized Musa, and forgot for the moment that he had heard of her second marriage. "Oh, I am so glad to see you!"

"Mrs. Carew, my dear boy," said Musa, gently, as she gave him her hand, which he shook heartily.

"Oh, pray excuse me, ma'am. I did hear, but I forgot," said the boy, blushing with confusion.

"This is my husband, Mr. August Carew," continued Musa.

The boy bowed very respectfully. But August held out his hand, saying:

"We must be friends, Master Carew. We are related. I suppose you know that your name is Carew?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I know it; but I had got to be called after my first stepfather's name somehow, and that name always stuck to me. I had no wish to change it. Mr. Seaforth was the only father I ever knew, and neither my poor mother nor myself ever owed much to the Carews," frankly replied Sam.

"I know it, my boy. But that is all changed now. I have a great deal to tell you. But I cannot enter upon the subject here. I am told that your time is out on board this ship?"

"Yes, sir. I only came here this morning to see an old comrade."

"And you are now at liberty to go?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I wish you to accompany me to London at once."

"I want to ask you a question first, sir. You see, sir, this meeting has come upon me like a thunderclap. I thought, when I was sent for, that the mate wanted me himself. Then, when I saw Mrs. Carew, I was so delighted that I forgot my danger——"

"'Danger,' my young friend?" echoed Mr. Carew.

"Yes, sir—danger of being arrested and taken back to the hateful despotism of my second stepfather. And the question I wished to ask is this, sir—whether it is your intention to take me back? Because, sir—I do not wish to be rude—but I won't go back. I'll die first!" said Sam, crimsoning.

"It is certainly not my intention to take you back, or rather to send you back against your will, my boy. You shall hear all that I have to say, and then decide for yourself. Will you come up to London with me now?"

"Yes, sir. I was going up to London any way," answered Sam. And then he looked at Musa and suddenly became very grave.

In the first surprise and excitement of meeting her,

and in the subsequent distrust and anxiety in regard to Mr. Carew's intentions toward himself, the boy had forgotten the fate of little Musette. Now he remembered it, and could scarcely keep the tears from his eyes.

"What is the matter, Sam?" inquired the lady.

"Oh, nothing, ma'am. I am ready to go with you now," answered the boy.

"I saw your mother the day before we sailed from New York. She was quite well. She had got your letter and had answered it," said Musa.

"Had she, ma'am? I haven't got the answer yet. I s'pose I shall soon, though. I am glad mother is well," he said, still looking at Musa gravely and sadly.

As the boat was now waiting alongside for them, Mr. Carew bade the civil mate good-morning and with his party left the ship.

They went back to London immediately. Mr. and Mrs. Carew took Sam with them to their hotel. But it was not until they had had luncheon and the table was cleared away and the room closed and the lady and gentleman and boy were left alone together, that Mr. Carew entered upon the business of the hour.

"In the first place, Samuel Carew, you have made such a great mistake in the character and disposition of your stepfather, and done him such cruel injustice that I cannot but think your mind has been poisoned against him by some other person. Now to other matters: Your grandfather, Colonel Harold Carew, died about three years ago. Did you know that?"

"No, sir. I did not even know that he was living when I left home. I barely knew that I had a grandfather who had turned my father out of doors; but whether he was living or dead, I did not know, and did not care. I sympathized with my father," said Sam.

"There were faults on both sides, my boy, and plenty of them. Well, you will do justice to your grandfather's character when you hear a little more about him in his own neighborhood, where he was very much beloved and honored for his generosity, notwithstanding his fiery temper and despotic will. Your grandfather, Master Carew, has left you his whole estate, with the exception of a just provision for his widow."

"Oh, then I have got an old grandmother!" exclaimed the boy.

"A rather young step-grandmother," said Mr. Carew, smiling to think of "bonny Kate" in such a relationship.

"A step-grandmother! Oh, bother!" exclaimed the lad, in deep disgust and abhorrence. "I beg your pardon, sir, but it is perfectly abominable all these 'steps!'—a stepfather, a step-grandmother—oh, lor!"

"I do not think, Master Carew, that you need be troubled by these step-relations of yours. I, in conjunction with a worthy Washington lawyer, have been appointed your guardian. I do not think you will find me a very disagreeable one."

"I am sure not, sir. I am very grateful to you for undertaking such a troublesome trust. And I am very glad you are not old Wilks. Old Wilks has nothing to do with me now, sir, has he?"

"The Rev. Mr. Wilks has nothing to do with you. But you will do that gentleman justice some of these days, and speak of him with more respect," said Mr. Carew, very gravely.

"Oh, sir, but you would not say so if you knew how cruelly he has used poor, dear, good, little——" Sam suddenly stopped, bit his lip, and flushed up to his forehead.

Mr. Carew looked at the boy keenly, but forbore to ask any questions.

"As you have left the service, Master Carew, I think it expedient that you should drop the uniform. I will take the liberty," he said, smiling slightly, "of recommending you to my tailors, the Messrs. Smith, No. — Regent street. I wish you to take up your residence with Mrs. Carew and myself until we can decide upon your future course. I have now an engagement, and will leave you with Mrs. Carew. This belongs to you," he added, handing what seemed to be a rather bulky letter to the youth, who looked at it inquiringly, bowed and slipped it in his pocket to be examined at some future opportunity.

When Mr. Carew had left the room, Musa turned to her young friend and again inquired:

"My boy, what is the matter with you? You could have trusted Mr. Carew implicitly. He is very wise and

good. You could have trusted him; but you will trust me. Tell me your trouble now, Sam."

"Oh, Mrs. Carew! First answer me one question, will you?" inquired the boy, in an earnest tone.

"It depends upon the question, Sam. What is it, my lad?" kindly asked Musa.

"Oh, Mrs. Carew, when you married Mr. Carew, you did not forsake little Musette, did you?" inquired the boy, in a tone of passionate earnestness.

Musa gazed at him in silent astonishment for a moment, and then broke forth:

"I desert my darling child? my sad-eyed little angel? Oh, Sam, what could have put such a thought into your head? She was stolen from me! Cruelly and treacherously stolen from me! It was the same winter, and indeed it was the same month, in which you went to sea—five years ago—that the nurse, Mollie Morris, stole the child and embarked with her in the ship *Fairy* for Liverpool. It was wrecked in midocean, and my darling, my little, meek, gentle child was swallowed up in the wintry sea!" she cried, with a sob.

"For the Lord's sake, hold on," said Sam, staring more wildly than ever—"you say, ma'am, it was five years ago since that happened?"

"Five years ago last January, my boy."

"And you think she really was lost and no mistake?"

"Ah, my boy, there have been moments when I have thought there might be some hope; but there can be none, Sam."

"Lord, whatever shall I do?" muttered Sam to himself. "Mrs. Carew," he then inquired, "have you got such a thing as a salts bottle about you?"

"No, my boy—why?"

"Because if you had a salts bottle, I wanted you to smell it hard. I have got something to tell you, Mrs. Carew, and I don't want you to faint away," said Sam, simply.

The lady's face suddenly went white as death. But she commanded herself, and said peremptorily:

"Tell me at once what you have to tell, Sam. Suspense is worse than the worst news can be to me now."

"It is not the worst news," murmured the boy, still hesitating.

"Does it concern my lost child? Say!" exclaimed the lady.

"Yes, it does; but it is not bad news."

"Tell me! tell me!"

"Well, then, little Musette was not lost in the *Fairy*. I met her myself in Liverpool two years and a half after that."

"Oh, Heaven! Sam! Sam!" cried the lady, seizing his arm and gazing wildly in his face, "where? when? how? Tell me all at once! Musette alive! Alive!" and the lady sank back in her chair, overwhelmed with emotion.

"Steady, steady, dear Mrs. Carew. It's all right. I'll tell you all about it. Oh, good gracious! I might have known I should knock her over with the news. Is there any hartshorn, or wine, or anything about, I wonder?" exclaimed the boy, in the utmost alarm, as he went cruising around the room in search of some restorative.

"I want nothing, Sam, but news of my child. Musette alive! Oh, heaven of heavens!" exclaimed Musa, still the prey of wildly conflicting emotions.

"Well, drink this glass of water, anyway, please, ma'am, and brace up, and I'll tell you all I know. It is all right," urged the boy, tendering the goblet.

Musa drank the water and returned the glass, with an emphatic: "Now!"

Sam drew a chair to her side and commenced and related how, on the very day of his landing at Liverpool from his first South American voyage, he saw little Musette in the street, asleep in the arms of an old organ-grinder, whom she had followed.

Sam took care to tell how healthy she looked and how neatly she was dressed. Then he told how he accompanied the organ-grinder and the child to the "Prince's Feathers," from which she had followed the old man, and how he found Mollie Morris there, engaged as a barmaid.

He related how the woman had told him a tissue of falsehoods, artfully mixed with some few truths, all

to the effect that Mrs. Carew, after her marriage, had utterly deserted the child, leaving her and her nurse dependent upon the charity of Mr. Wilks, who finally obliged them to leave the house together.

Sam very briefly told her how he had persuaded Mollie Morris to move to London, and left her comfortably settled in a lodging-house, and how he had written a long letter home to his mother to let her know where Mollie and little Musette were living, in case they should be wanted; and also that they were both, as well as himself, comfortable and happy. He had left this letter with Mollie to post when he went to sea.

"She never posted it. The traitress never posted it, and never intended to do so. If she had, what years of agony I should have been saved. But go on. For Heaven's sake, go on!" exclaimed Musa.

"That was the last I saw of Mollie or little Musette. I went on my voyage, and was gone three years. I returned about a month ago, and as soon as I could leave the ship I came up to London to look for Mollie and Musette. I went to Wellington street, Strand, where I left them, but they were no longer there. Strangers were in the house who could tell me nothing about them."

"Lost in London! Do you mean to tell me that my child is lost in London?" wildly exclaimed Musa, all her hopes suddenly destroyed.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Carew; we shall find them. Mollie has prospered, most likely, and is keeping a lodging-house somewhere in a better part of the town. I know we shall find them. I have not the least fear, particularly now that Mr. Carew is here to take measures for their discovery," said Sam, confidently, adding: "I am sure they are here in London, all right."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUKE OF MONTCALLA.

At this moment a waiter entered and presented a card: "The Duke of Montcalla."

"Bertie!" said Musa, to herself, with a gleam of joy

lighting up the darkness of her mood. "Where is the gentleman?" she inquired.

"In the reading-room, madam."

"Show him up here, if you please.

"You will please excuse me now, Mrs. Carew, and I will go and look up that tailor Mr. Carew recommended to me," said Sam, nervously arising, for he did not like the idea of meeting a stranger, especially a "live duke."

"Yes, go, Sam; but return as soon as you can. You are to sleep here to-night, you know."

Sam made his escape about two minutes before the Duke of Montcalla was announced. He entered and crossed the room to Musa.

"Bertie! Oh, I am so glad to see you!" exclaimed Musa, hastening to meet him.

"Welcome to England, fair sister," said the young duke, cordially pressing the hands that she gave him.

"And I am glad to congratulate you on a piece of news that I saw announced in the *Times*," said Musa, when they were seated side by side on the sofa.

"My forthcoming marriage with my little Welsh cousin? Yes, it will come off next month. You will probably receive cards as early as next week," said the young duke.

"Thanks, dear Bertie. What is she like—this sweet Welsh cousin of yours? I know, of course, that she is

"'Queen-Rose of the Rosebud garden of girls,'

and all that. So you needn't give me a poetical description, but a statistical one—just such a description as the matter-of-fact official will put in your passport when you go abroad for your wedding tour," said Musa, archly.

"Well, Musa," replied Bertie, smiling, "to begin with, she is about nineteen years of age. She was a child in the nursery when she was first set aside as the future wife of my elder brother. Since my brother passed away it seems that the little girl has been reserved for me. I knew that, and I kept away from old Tremontane Hold for years. It was only by accident I met my

sweet cousin, and—I loved her before I knew who she was," added the young man, earnestly.

"Delightful," said Musa. "That was a conquest of which, under the circumstances, the very queen of hearts might have been vain."

"I do not think vanity possible in her soul. She is the loveliest——"

"Oh, yes, dear Bertie, I know——

"'She's all my fancy pictured her,
She's lovely—she's divine!'

I wish you much happiness, Bertie, dear."

"Thanks, I am sure you do. Your congratulations are more than lip-deep, I know. But now, dear Musa, tell me of yourself, and your husband and child. I saw in the list of arrivals by the *Messenger,* 'Mr. and Mrs. Carew, child, and two servants.'"

"August is well. He is engaged now with his chief."

"And how about the child?—A bouncing boy? A future president? All American boys, I believe, are prospective presidents."

"No, Bertie, I am sorry to say I have no boy. But really, without any maternal vanity, I may say that I have the loveliest little girl. But I will not describe my little fairy to you. I will let you judge for yourself," said Musa, with a smile, as she touched the bell.

Her own old, white-headed servant, Pendragon, answered it.

"Tell Cassy to bring Miss Ethelinde down," she directed.

In a few minutes the order was obeyed, and Cassy entered the room, courtesying, and leading the little girl by the hand.

The young duke had always been used to the society of children, having had a houseful of little brothers and sisters of his own. And so he contrived to interest and amuse little Ethelinde for about half an hour, at the end of which time her mother sent her back to the nursery.

When they were once more alone together Musa said:

"I have something to show you, Bertie."

And she went to a little cabinet that stood upon the

side-table and took from it a folded document, which she brought and put in her visitor's hand.

It was the certificate of her first marriage.

"Oh, I am very glad you have found this," said the young duke, with so much earnestness that Musa gazed at him with surprise for a moment, and then asked:

"Of what possible importance can this now be, Bertie, except to place my honor beyond cavil before yourself and some few intimate friends who have heard of my claims as the sometime widow of your brother?"

"My dear Musa, your honor always has been 'beyond cavil,' and does not need this marriage certificate as a support. But there are other considerations. Let me explain them. You must understand, Musa, that my mother had an elder half-brother, known as the Hon. Donald Livingston. He went to India about half a century ago, and there amassed an enormous fortune. He never married; but some years before his death he made a will leaving his entire estate to his nephew and namesake, Donald Livingston Caux, Earl of Cressy, and to his heirs forever. Not to his male heirs only. Failing boys, girls would inherit his estate. For some reason—procrastination, perhaps—Mr. Livingston never made another will, but died about two months ago, at the ripe age of seventy-five, leaving his old will in full force. We received the news of his death and of the only existing will about two weeks ago."

Musa had noticed at their first meeting that the young duke was dressed in black, but that which had seemed to her American eyes a mere accident of taste now became significant of bereavement.

"There was no necessity for a new will. Lord Cressy's brothers and sisters would naturally be his heirs," said Musa, gravely.

"Yes; had Cressy died childless and unmarried we should have been so. But Cressy was married. He left a widow, and his widow, if childless by him, is entitled to one-half his princely estate. If he had left a child, also, his widow would in that case have been entitled to one-third, and his child to the remaining two-thirds. Do you now understand, my fair sister?"

"Yes; I understand it too well. Ah, Heaven!" breathed the lady with a suppressed moan.

Bertie looked at her in much commiseration. He had watched her with affectionate solicitude throughout the whole interview. And he had not failed to notice, under all her superficial affability and cheerfulness, a deep undercurrent of sadness. He had heard her sigh profoundly, even while she caressed her beautiful and happy little Ethelinde. And now he observed that as soon as he had alluded to any possibility of her marriage with the Earl of Cressy having been blessed with a child, such a cloud of sorrow swept over her face as he had never seen there before.

"Musa, my dear," he said, "I sometimes think that you have not entirely confided in me. I do not wish to force your confidence, dear. I have suspected that there might have been a child born of your marriage with Cressy. I kept my suppositions to myself. I could not solicit your confidence then, my sister, nor should I do so now but for some circumstances that have come to my knowledge, and the fact of this large estate having been left, two-thirds of which belong to Cressy's child, if there is one."

As he spoke Musa buried her face in her handkerchief, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, forgive me! I distress you," said Bertie, anxiously.

"You are right," she said, as soon as she could speak through her sobs. "You are right. I had a child, or rather a seraph! Oh, Bertie! You have seen my little Ethelinde, my bright, joyous one, whom I call my fairy, and my sunbeam! And you thought her beautiful exceedingly, I know. But you never saw my little Musette!"

"'Musette!'" echoed the young duke, suddenly.

"Yes, Musette! It was the soft diminutive of my own name, and it seemed to suit my tender, gentle darling. Oh, Bertie, if ever a seraph of love was incarnated on this earth it was my meek, loving little Musette!"

Here Musa's emotions so utterly overcame her that she gave way to a burst of passionate sobs and tears.

As soon as she regained her composure Musa told the Duke of Montcalla the story of little Musette's abduction and her supposed loss at sea.

"Oh, Bertie," she added, "for five years I mourned my meek angel as only a mother in my circumstances could mourn her lost child—with an inconsolable sorrow, deepened by an infinite remorse! But only this morning, Bertie, I met one who knew my little Musette, and had seen her and her treacherous nurse in London three years ago."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the young duke, his countenance lighting up with some hidden, unexpressed hope. But before he could speak again the door opened, and Mr. Carew entered, accompanied by General ——— and young Samuel Carew, as we must henceforth call the heir of Pirate's Peak and Raven Rocks.

Musa, in rising to receive the guests, artfully turned so as to bring her face within the shadow of the blue satin window curtains and to conceal or soften the traces of recent agitation. The minister advanced and shook hands with Mrs. Carew. At the same moment Mr. Carew greeted Bertie.

The necessary introductions were made and the usual courteous salutations were exchanged. When Bertie was about to take leave he said:

"I hope you have no engagement for to-morrow morning?"

"None whatever. We are at your service for the whole day, if you please," answered Mr. Carew, speaking for the whole party.

"Then I am about to do an unusual thing. I am about to invite myself to lunch with you and Mrs. Carew, and also to ask permission to bring a little *protégée* of mine," said Bertie.

"Delightful!" answered Mr. and Mrs. Carew in one voice.

"We lunch at two o'clock, usually; but we will fix any other hour you may prefer," added Musa, cordially.

"Pray do not change the hour. I will report myself punctually at two," answered Bertie, as he bowed and retired.

General ——— soon after took leave. Sam went out to receive some parcels that had been sent home for him. And the husband and wife were left alone together.

"Oh, August!" said Musa, throwing herself down be-

side her husband on the sofa and dropping her head on his shoulder, "I have heard such news to-day!"

"News! my darling?"

"Such news, August!"

"Good or bad, Musa?"

"Very good news! the very best news! The worst news!" she answered, confusedly, and then she told him all that she had heard from Sam about Musette and Mollie Morris, and ended by saying:

"But send for him and ask him yourself. And, oh, August," she pleaded, clasping her hands and looking prayerfully in his eyes, "oh, August, find my darling for me!"

"If she is on earth she shall be found!" exclaimed Mr. Carew. "But I must question the boy," he added, as he rang the bell.

"Go to Master Carew's room and ask him to come here immediately," was the order that he gave to old Pendragon, who had answered the bell.

Samuel Carew soon entered.

"My dear boy," said Musa, "I want you to detail to Mr. Carew all the circumstances of your meeting with little Musette, and of your residence with Mollie Morris, and your parting with the woman and child, when you went on your last voyage."

"Yes, madam," answered Sam, taking the seat that Mr. Carew silently pointed out to him.

The youth then began and related the story in detail, from the moment of his finding Musette asleep on the old organ-grinder's knees, at a street corner in Liverpool, to the moment, seven weeks later, that he kissed her good-by in the lodging-house in London, when he went on his voyage.

Mr. Carew let the boy tell the story straight through without interruption. At the close he began to question him. Sam's answers were clear and satisfactory, so far as they went.

"But," he added, "Mollie Morris had moved away from the lodging-house where he had left her with Musette, and he had not been able to find a trace of either the woman or child since his return to England."

"That will do, my boy. We will take immediate steps for the recovery of little Musette."

So saying he sat down to his writing-table and rapidly wrote out half-a-dozen advertisements offering a large reward for news of a woman named Mary Morris and a child named Musette, who three years before lived in a lodging-house at No. — Wellington street, Strand.

"There, my boy, call a hansom cab, and take these advertisements around to the *Times, Chronicle, Standard,* and other morning papers. Have them inserted at once. Then drive to Scotland Yard and ask for the chief, and request him to call here, or to send a good detective—the best one he can get," said Mr. Carew, when he had finished his task.

Samuel Carew eagerly undertook this mission, and hastened away to accomplish it.

"What do you think of our chances of success?" inquired Musa, very anxiously.

"I think them very good," answered August, as encouragingly as he could speak.

"Then I have another subject to speak to you of, dear husband—one that I shrink from broaching," said Musa, hesitatingly.

"What is that, dearest? And why should you shrink from broaching it to me?" affectionately inquired August.

"Because it is the subject of my former marriage," answered Musa, in a low, hesitating voice.

"Well, dearest, what of that?"

"It may become my duty to establish the validity of that first marriage."

"Upon what new account?"

"This: There has been an immense fortune of several millions of pounds sterling left to the late Earl of Cressy and his heirs."

"And you want your portion of that fortune? My dear, have we not enough of this world's goods?"

"We have enough. And our daughter Ethelinde will be a very rich heiress. But little Musette, if she be found, will have nothing. She can inherit nothing of ours, because she is not the child of our marriage. But if I establish the validity of my first marriage, which I can easily do now, having the marriage certificate and

all the letters written to me by the late Earl of Cressy, then, indeed, my darling, if found, instead of being a nameless little pauper, will come into her title of courtesy as an earl's daughter, and into a dower of several million pounds sterling. August, have I any right by inaction to deprive my meek, beautiful darling of all her birthrights as the granddaughter of a duke, the daughter of an earl and the heiress of a nabob, and leave her—as she will be, if found—the nameless and penniless child of questionable birth?" earnestly urged Musa.

Mr. Carew did not reply at once. He seemed buried in reflection.

"And yet, my beloved, my adored husband, if it be your will that I shall remain inactive, I will do so. You have made all the strength and comfort and joy of my life. And I will let no interest, however dear, clash with your will or my devotion," added Musa, with deep feeling.

He drew her to his side and kissed her tenderly, as he said:

"I never doubted your devotion, even in the darkest of days, my peerless wife; and cannot begin to do so now. But, Musa, if your little Musette should be found, as I trust in Heaven she may be, it will become your sacred duty to establish the validity of your former marriage with the late Earl of Cressy at whatever cost to your feelings or mine. Justice must be done to the child."

"Heaven bless you, my dear husband! Heaven make me worthy of you—if that be possible!" said Musa, with much emotion. "But, oh, that my darling may be found! Oh, that she may be found!" she added, with fervent sighs.

As she said this there came a rap at the door, followed by the entrance of a waiter, who announced that there was a "person" below, who asked to see Mr. Carew.

"Show him up," said that gentleman.

When the waiter had left the room to do his errand August turned to Musa and said:

"It is some one from Scotland Y rd, my dear. And you had better retire, perhaps."

Musa immediately arose and went into her bedroom.

A few moments passed and the detective from Scotland Yard entered the room, bowed, gave his name as "Ketchum," and presented a note from his chief.

Mr. Carew invited the bearer to be seated.

The note was from the chief of police at Scotland Yard, to introduce Mr. John Ketchum, whom it represented to be the most skillful and successful detective in the force.

Mr. Carew was closeted with this detective for more than two hours, during which he gave him a full description of the woman and the child, with a detailed history of the abduction, and an account of their residence in London three years previous.

Then he gave him a check for a hundred pounds and directions to spare no expense in his search for the missing parties, and so sent him away.

As soon as the man was gone Mr. Carew opened the door leading to the next room and called Musa.

She hastened to meet him.

"Well, my dearest, I have secured the services of perhaps the most adroit detective in the world, John Ketchum, of Scotland Yard," said August, when they were once more seated together.

"Yes, I have heard of his wondrous skill—almost like magic," replied Musa.

"He it was who traced out the 'Red Mill murder,' and brought the assassin to justice. And it was he who recovered the great Albemarle diamond, stolen from the premises of Messrs. Rayburn, jewelers, Oxford street."

"Yes, yes, August; I have heard of those cases. I know something of what the man has done for others, but what can he do for us—oh, what can he do for us?" breathlessly demanded Musa.

"My dearest, he says that if the child is living, and in London, he will produce her in a week. If she is not in London, yet anywhere in the United Kingdom, he will find her in a month. He is confident of success."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MEETING.

The next day was the first of June. It was a very fine morning, even in London.

Musa, profoundly anxious as she was concerning the fate of her lost child, yet contrived to interest herself in superintending the arrangements of a very elegant lunch-table, to do honor to her dear friend, though self-invited guest, the young Duke of Montcalla.

It was just a quarter to two o'clock p. m., when the door of the drawing-room was thrown open by old Cornwallis, who, in his own peculiar "gold-stick-in-waiting" style, announced:

"The Duke of Montcalla."

And Bertie entered the room, leading by the hand a lovely little girl about seven years of age, dressed in white from head to foot.

Musa arose and walked forward to receive her guest. She had forgotten that he was to bring "a little *protégée.*" She scarcely now saw the little girl. Her eyes were raised to the young duke's face, and her hand was extended to greet him with a pleasant "Good-morning."

"Will you welcome my little *protégée* now, Musa?" inquired Bertie.

She cast her eyes down on the child—started—gazed—paled—flushed—and then——

"Musette! Oh, my God, I thank Thee!"

And she sank down upon her knees, and clasped the child to her heart, almost broken under its burden of unutterable joy and gratitude. Her cry brought August Carew out from his study.

Mr. Carew saw this group—Musa kneeling on the floor, with a white-robed child clasped to her heart, her head bent over the little one's form, her bosom heaving with deep sobs of joy. And beside them Bertie, holding up his hand in an admonitory manner.

Mr. Carew took in the situation at a glance. He advanced and offered his hand to Bertie, who received and

pressed it in silence. Musa was lost to everything in the universe except her recovered child.

"Musette! Musette! Oh, my God, I thank Thee!" broke again in a rapture of deep gratitude and reverence from her lips, as she raised and threw back her head, panting, gasping as if her soul would have burst forth in that profound aspiration of thankfulness.

She did not wonder how the child had been recovered. It was enough at that moment that she felt and saw her there.

And little Musette, the wondering and pitying child?

There was ineffable tenderness and compassion in her dark eyes as they rested on the eloquent face of the beautiful lady kneeling before her; but there was no intuitive knowledge of that lady's near relationship to herself. With little Musette, however, pity was always the nearest kin to love. And love was the keynote of all her life's harmony. So she gazed on the weeping beauty in wonder and pity for a while. And then her little white-gloved hands, like two little white doves, flew out and hovered around Musa's neck, and her soft, pathetic voice murmured:

"Don't cry, lady, I love you. Oh, indeed I do love you."

This was too much for the mother's overwrought heart.

"You love me, my seraph, you love me?" she cried, dropping her head once more over the form of the child and breaking into a shower of tears.

And little Musette's hands hovered around her face and tried to wipe the tears from her eyes, as she repeated her little heavenly phrase:

"I love you, I do love you so much."

Then August Carew approached the group and laid his comforting hand upon the bowed head of his wife as he said:

"My own dear Musa, my heart shares your deep joy at this hour, and goes up with yours in fervent thanksgiving for this happy restoration. But, my dearest, try now to recover yourself, and control your emotions. See, you distress this sweet child, who is doing her best to soothe

you. Children don't understand tears of joy. She thinks that you are in trouble. Let me help you to rise."

And he took her hand tenderly and assisted her to her feet.

She still held the child closely clasped to her side with one hand and arm, while she raised the other hand to her own bewildered brow, and ran the fingers through the dark ringlets of her hair, as she stood gazing at her husband, as if she scarcely recognized him.

She seemed indeed almost bereft of her reason by the suddennes and excess of her joy.

"Have I passed away from the earth and met my child in the world of spirits at last? She would be seven years old in heaven now. And, oh, her beauty is celestial and her garments are white! Have I met Musette in the spirit land, I wonder, or am I still in the flesh, on earth?" she said, looking strangely at her husband and still clasping her child.

"You are here by my side, Musa, my dear wife. Try to collect your faculties and steady your nerves. You have borne grief heroically. Do not sink under joy. Take your little Musette by the hand, and let me lead you to your room, and in its seclusion you can get accustomed to your happiness and compose yourself," said August, in a low, admonitory tone, as he conducted the lady and the child to the adojining chamber, put them gently in at the door, and closed it after them.

Then he turned to the young duke with some attempted apology for Musa's want of self-control. Bertie said:

"Who can wonder at anything that we have seen? The shock, joyful as it was, was yet enough to have killed her. The fault was mine. I should have prepared her for this meeting. Though, indeed, until this hour I was by no means certain that this lovely little girl was really her lost Musette. I only suspected and hoped that the little waif I have had under my care for the last two years might be the missing child. And now I suppose you would like to hear how I came to be in possession of this lovely little girl?"

"Certainly, just as soon as you feel disposed to tell me."

"I feel so now. It is rather a pathetic story. Therefore I would prefer to relate it to yourself alone. You can afterward repeat as much or as little of it as you see fit to your wife."

As the two gentlemen conversed they approached the upper end of the room, where the little golden-haired and blue-eyed elf, Ethelinde, sat half-hidden in the depths of a large cushioned chair, and looking out with wonder-widened eyes at all that she had seen and failed to comprehend.

"Ah, sweetheart, is it you? How do you do? Do you still like me? Will you give me a kiss?" gayly inquired Bertie, lifting the bright fairy in his arms.

"Yes, of course I like you," frankly replied Ethelinde, giving the customary proof. "But what little girl was that you brought here? And what made mamma kneel down and cry?"

"What shall I say to the child?" gravely inquired the young duke, as he set her upon her feet again, and looked in droll perplexity toward Mr. Carew.

"Ethelinde, run right away to mamma. She is in her bedroom, and she will tell you all about your dear little sister," said August, turning the child around and pointing to the chamber door.

"My little sister! Oh! Is she my little sister?" panted the child, eagerly, her bright-blue eyes dancing with delight.

"Yes, indeed, she is your little sister—your own dear little sister. Run and see her. The duke here brought her to you this morning. Run away now and see her," answered her father, hurrying her off.

Away darted Ethelinde, like some bright bird through space, to find that ardently-desired blessing of every little, only daughter's heart—a little sister companion.

"Now for your story, duke. I am really very much interested to learn how you first discovered the child," said August.

"It is now two years since, near the close of a sunny day, in the height of the season, I was driving in from Kensington, and had reached Oxford street, on my way to my club.

"I had reached the corner of Regent street, when I

witnessed an occurrence that curdled my blood. I saw the tiniest little girl that ever held a toy broom trying to sweep the crossing. She was about half-way across the street when she started to get out of the way of a heavy van, and at the same instant fell under the horses' feet before I could pull up.

The carriage was stopped. The child was lifted up, insensible, by my servant, and laid, by my orders, upon my knees—a little pale, pathetic form, wonderfully clean for a little crossing-sweeper, and clothed in well-patched garments. I thought the child was only stunned or fainting. So I dispatched a messenger to summon our own family physician, and I gave the order to drive gently back to Montcalla Lodge."

"That child was Musette, then?"

"Yes. When I reached Montcalla Lodge I sent for my esteemed maiden aunt, Lady Etheldreda Caux, and for our worthy old housekeeper, Barnes. I informed Lady Etheldreda that I had run over and nearly killed the child, and that she must be tenderly cared for. And I laid her in the motherly arms of Barnes.

"To do my prim maiden aunt justice she received this little charge with great compassion, and had her put to bed comfortably.

"Our physician arrived promptly, and went up to examine the little patient. And I waited the result of the examination with great anxiety.

"At length the doctor came down, and his report relieved me very much. He said that there were no serious injuries, either internal or external. The child had received a severe shock to her nervous system, and would require perfect rest and good treatment for a few days. That was absolutely all. And the doctor went away, promising to look in again the next morning.

"As soon as my mind was relieved in regard to the child I thought of the business that had taken me out in the earlier part of the afternoon. And I ordered the brougham and left the house to transact it.

"I returned just before dinner. I thought I would like to see the injured child, so I went up to look at her. She was in one of the smaller spare bedrooms, lying in a dainty little white bed. Her little black-haired head lay

well up on the pillow; her cheeks were bright with fever. I thought I had never seen a prettier child.

"I took the little feverish hand and spoke to her. But she gazed on me without answering, and began to babble at random in a sweet, birdlike voice:

" 'Pennies, mammy! So many pennies for sweeping See! see! So many pennies! Buy tea, mammy! Buy sugar!'

" 'Has she been long like this?' I inquired of the housemaid, who was watching beside her.

"The girl answered that the child had been 'rambling in her mind' ever since six o'clock.

"But soon the child's birdlike tones sank and changed into the deepest pathos, as she murmured, slowly:

" 'My—poor—mammy. My—poor—mammy.'

"Her pathetic voice went to my heart and roused my memory. I recollected then what I ought never to have forgotten—that this child had friends who ought to have been quickly advised of her whereabouts and condition.

"I left the room, urging the housemaid to take the best care of her, and I went downstairs and dispatched a messenger to the scene of the accident to make investigations.

"It was late at night before my messenger returned. He said that he had experienced some difficulty in doing his errand, and had been obliged to call in the aid of a detective-policeman before he succeeded in finding the poor child's miserable home, over a junk shop, in the neighborhood of Drury lane.

"He further reported that he found the mother in destitute circumstances, and in a dying condition. She was so low, indeed, that she could scarcely be made to understand that the child had been lost, and was found, and was safe.

"The next morning I went to my aunt and told her the piteous story of the destitute and dying mother, and of this mere babe going out to sweep the crossing, and of her delirious babbling about 'sweeping,' and 'pennies,' and 'tea,' and her 'poor—dear—mammy.'

"Lady Etheldreda wept. Her charities were known far and wide. She ordered her brougham, had it stocked with tea, sugar, wine, jelly, and everything else that her

experience taught her might be acceptable to the sick woman, and taking her maid with her, she drove down to the wretched neighborhood and to the miserable room that little Musette had called her home.

"There she found the woman Morris in full as destitute a condition as had been reported, but so ill as to be almost indifferent or insensible to surroundings.

"Lady Etheldreda caused her to be at once and carefully removed to the Westminster Hospital, where she could receive the very best treatment.

"The next day I accompanied Lady Etheldreda in her visit to this hospital, where we found the woman somewhat better. She seemed grateful for our care of little Musette, and anxious to be reunited to the child.

"When, however, we explained that the little one was not well enough to be brought to her that day she grew very uneasy, and continued to murmur from time to time:

" 'Lord, forgive me my great sin—Lord forgive me my great sin!'

"And when we were about to take leave of her she raised her fading eyes to mine and asked:

" 'Do you think the Lord will forgive me a great sin, when I am so sorry that I did it?'

" 'Most certainly he will,' I answered; 'but I will send a minister to you, who will tell you better than I can of the Lord's tender mercy and loving kindness.'

" 'It is—about—the child,' she said, her breath coming shorter and shorter. 'It is—about—Musette. She is—not my own child—she is a little lady.'

"Saying this the woman drew a deep sigh of relief. It was her last breath."

"Dead?" inquired Mr. Carew.

"Yes, dead. Her end, you see, was much nearer than we knew. We gave directions for a decent funeral, and then returned to Montcalla House—I, with the firm resolve to educate and provide for the little seraph that I had nearly run down and trampled to death in Oxford street.

"When little Musette was able to leave her bed and walk about her room her pleadings to go home to her 'poor, dear mammy,' were almost heart-rending.

"Then Lady Etheldreda took the child upon her lap and told her that the good Saviour had taken her poor sick mammy to heaven, and had made her well and happy, and given her everything she wanted. And that her mammy would never be poor, sick, or hungry, or cold, or sorry any more, but would live among the holy and happy angels in the light of the Lord's love, forever. All this the child's heart received as pure truth.

"The dying woman had said, with her last breath, that this child was not her own—that this child was a little lady. And every look, gesture and tone of little Musette proved her indeed to be a little lady of the most refined, the sweetest and loveliest nature. And as a little lady I resolved to have her brought up.

"Even Lady Etheldreda recognized the child's gentle and noble nature, and felt no hesitation in introducing her into the nursery and schoolroom of my little sisters.

" 'She must be made to understand, however, that the woman Morris, whom she called her "mammy," was not her mother, but only her nurse, and she must then be allowed to forget her, if it is possible,' said my aunt.

"And I agreed with her; for I was so pleased to see her receive the forlorn child so readily that I would have agreed to almost anything she might have proposed.

"The child was therefore told that the poor 'mammy' she mourned was not her own mother, but only her 'mammy' or nurse. And that some day she might see her own mother.

"Now this revelation might have set another child to asking awkward questions that none of us could have answered. But this meek little girl received whatever we told her as truth, and asked no further information.

" 'I love my poor, dear mammy,' she said, very tenderly; that was all.

"And then she was introduced into the nursery and the schoolroom of my little sisters. I have four of them —Edith, aged twelve, Maude and Bertie, twins, aged ten, and little Constance, aged eight.

"These children were very fond of pets, and had any number of birds, puppies, kittens, and so forth. But I

will venture to say they never had a pet they welcomed with so much delight, and loved with so much devotion, as little Musette. They were emulous as to who should show the little stranger the most affectionate attention. They pressed upon her their prettiest dolls, pictures, books, toys, and pets.

"I thought that the child herself was only a new toy or a new pet in the nursery, and that these children would soon grow tired of their idol.

"But no; it was not so. Little Musette, with her fond, unselfish nature, returned their affection with so much love that she completely and forever won their hearts.

"And the sad-eyed child grew bright and happy among them.

"She has been their inseparable companion for the last two years, sharing their studies and their pastimes; remaining with them at Montcalla Lodge during the spring and early summer months; going with them to Brighton in July, to Scotland in September, and to Caux Castle for the Christmas holidays.

"I taught her to call me uncle, not knowing how near the truth I came. And this morning I told her that I was going to bring her here to introduce her to a lady friend. And I brought her. My story is finished, Mr. Carew," said the young duke, abruptly cutting short his discourse, as he saw the chamber door open and Musa re-enter the parlor, leading her two little girls, one in each hand.

"And you must receive my heartfelt, lifelong thanks for all your saving care of our forlorn child," said Mr. Carew, with much emotion, as he arose and took the young man's hand and earnestly pressed it.

Musa came directly up to Bertie, with tearful eyes and radiant smile, holding out her hand, and saying:

"To think I have not even thanked you yet for the great happiness you have brought me, Bertie! But, oh! believe me, that the profound, eternal gratitude I feel can never be expressed, and never be lessened!"

"Nonsense, my fair sister! Nobody owes me any thanks. I did but please myself in taking care of this sweet little girl, before I ever suspected her to be your

daughter and my niece. I congratulate you with all my heart on her recovery," said the young duke, cordially shaking the hand she had offered him.

"I will not ask you yet by what happy chance you found her," said Musa, who was still utterly ignorant whether little Musette had been under her young uncle's care a day, a month, or a year.

"No, do not ask me now, dear Musa. I have told Mr. Carew the whole story, and he will tell it to you at some convenient time," Bertie gravely answered.

"I will tell you all about it to-night, Musa," added August.

"That will do. It is quite enough for me at present to know that I have the child," said Musa, bending her head in reverential gratitude.

At that moment young Samuel Carew entered the room, and bowed to the duke.

He turned and stared at the strange little girl for half a moment, and, recognizing her by her beautiful eyes, he ran across the room, seized her little hand, gazed at her, and then snatched her up and kissed her heartily, exclaiming:

"Musette! you have forgotten me again! I knew you would. How could you remember so long, poor little soul? Oh, you'll soon know me again though, and you'll feel as you had known me all your life. And so you have, mostly," added Sam, as he set the astonished child on her feet once more.

"You knew her as I did, in a moment, Sam," said Mrs. Carew.

"Why, yes! Who could ever forget her eyes? But, oh, I say! Didn't old Ketchum make short work of finding her?" he inquired, in surprise.

"The detective did not find her. The Duke of Montcalla brought our little girl to us this morning. You shall hear the whole story by and by, Sam," Musa explained.

"And, oh! by the way, I had forgotten," put in the young Duke, jocosely, "I think I may claim that munificent reward offered for the reovery of the lost child! How much was it? Two hundred pounds, or five hundred!"

Before any one could reply "in kind" to Bertie's pleasantries, the folding doors, leading into the dining-room, were thrown open, and old Cornwallis appeared and announced that——

"Madam is served."

Bertie gave his arm to Musa to conduct her to the table. August led little Musette by the hand, and Sam followed with Ethelinde.

"I think," said Musa, with a smile, as she took her seat at the head of the table—"I think that the occasion may permit the presence of the children at our lunch-table for once."

"I think the occasion decidedly calls for them," added August.

"And I think they complete a very well arranged little lunch party. We are just three ladies and three gentlemen," concluded Bertie.

The lunch passed off very pleasantly. And when the first bottle of Johannesberg was opened, and all the glasses filled around, Bertie, glass in hand, arose and said:

"The doubtful old custom of drinking health has passed into disuse, except at public dinners. Yet I wish to propose a health that lies close to my heart." He paused and looked around upon the small, expectant party, then bowed courteously to his hostess and to the little girl by her side, as he gravely added:

"The Countess of Cressy and the Lady Musette Caux."

CHAPTER XIX.

MUSA'S TRIUMPH.

Very soon after lunch was over, the young Duke of Montcalla took leave of his friends.

That night, when the two little girls had gone to bed, Mr. Carew, seated with his wife and his ward, told the story of little Musette's life in London, and her rescue by her uncle, as it had been told him by Bertie himself.

And in listening to the relation of the sweet child's suf-

ferings and labors of love, Musa dropped the very last tears she was ever required to shed for little Musette.

The next morning the young duke called again, bringing with him his youngest sister, Constance. Leaving "Connie" with the two little girls, under the charge of Musa, Bertie drew August off to the latter's study for a private interview. They were closeted together for more than an hour.

The subject of their conversation was Musa and Musette, and their common interests. And during that interview it was fully determined between the two gentlemen that, for little Musette's sake, Musa must acknowledge and establish her first marriage—namely, with the late Earl of Cressy.

And it was arranged that on the following day the two little girls—Musette and Ethelinde—should be sent under the charge of their nursery governess to Montcalla Lodge, to spend the day with their young relatives there. And that Mr. and Mrs. Carew should meet the Duke of Montcalla at the chambers of the family solicitors—Messrs. Coke & Coke, of the Inner Temple.

I will not bore my readers by detailing the legal proceedings that occupied our friends for the following nine days.

It may be sufficient to say that at the end of that period Musa Carew was accepted as the Countess of Cressy, and Musette as the lawful daughter and heiress of the late Earl of Cressy. And the India fortune was turned over to them.

"But, oh, August," said Musa, as they talked together, in their drawing-room, when all this had been accomplished, "I feel as if I were disloyal to your name and disloyal to all my republican principles in accepting and using this title."

"My dear Musa," said Mr. Carew, smiling, "but for the interests involved, it would be of the least possible importance to you, or to me, whether you should be called Mrs. Carew or the Countess of Cressy. In using the title, however, you will please me and do my will. You will not lose your own name, of course. You are still Musa Carew, as well as Countess of Cressy. The title is not your name, but a mere title of courtesy. It is necessary

for little Musette's interests that you should assume it. It will also serve you well, while you live in this title-loving community. If you do not like it, when we get back to America, you can drop it, of course. It will be at your own option even there."

"Well, dear August," said Musa, smiling brightly, "since this pleases you, it really pleases me. I should be more or less than woman if it did not. Perhaps I shall not drop it even in America. Perhaps I may retain it even there, if only on account of those women who, years ago, maligned me. And, by the way, I wonder what has become of Armida Sutton? Her poor mother has not heard from her for many months."

Before Mr. Carew could think of any answer to this difficult question, the door was thrown open, and the old, white-headed negro, Cornwallis, in his most dignified manner, announced:

"Lady Dreadful Cough!"

And before Musa could get over the effect of this astounding annunciation, Lady Etheldreda Caux entered the room.

Her ladyship was tall, swarthy and dark-haired, and alarmingly like her brother, the late duke. She was richly but plainly dressed in carriage costume.

Musa arose and received her ladyship very gracefully, and then presented Mr. Carew.

Lady Etheldreda resembled her late brother, the grim old duke, in personal appearance only. In character and disposition she was very different from him. She had now come in person to invite August and Musa to dine at Montcalla Lodge on the following Saturday.

"It will be a family party only, my dear countess," said Lady Etheldreda, in explanation. "And we wish Mr. Carew and yourself to meet the Dowager Marchioness of Llangollen, and her daughter, Lady Gwendolyn Newydd, who is betrothed, as perhaps you are aware, to my nephew Montcalla."

Musa bowed assent, and Lady Etheldreda continued:

"The marchioness has come into her town house on Westbourne terrace for the wedding, which will come off within a month. We may expect you on Saturday

evening to meet our Welsh friends, I hope," added her ladyship, rising to take leave.

As August and Musa had no engagement for Saturday evening, they accepted the invitation as frankly as it was given, and promised to go.

When Lady Etheldreda Caux had left, Musa turned to her husband, crimson with mortification, and said:

"Really, August, we must get an English footman in place of old Cornwallis. He is so utterly ignorant. Just think of the way in which he announced Lady Etheldreda Caux!"

August broke down and laughed heartily, partly at the remembrance of that stunning performance, and partly at Musa's look of dismay in speaking of it.

"You are much too sensitive, my dear Musa. There is no harm done. Besides, you might not improve matters by changing old Cornwallis for an English servant. These latter, also, make inconvenient mistakes. Witness the flunkey who lately petrified an evening party at Argyle House by announcing the Honorable Eustace De la Flote, as 'Mr. De'il afloat!' But perhaps," added August, archly, "though old Cornwallis was quite good enough for Mrs. Carew, he may not be equal to the requirements of the Countess of Cressy."

"Oh, August!" exclaimed Musa, with a blush and a laugh.

And after that no more was ever said about changing Cornwallis for an English servant.

On Saturday, as by engagement, August and Musa went to dine at Montcalla Lodge, and to meet the Welsh marchioness and her daughter.

This, be it remembered, was the first occasion upon which Musa had made a visit since her arrival in England. And thus quietly, on this evening of the family reunion at Montcalla Lodge, she entered their society for the first time as Countess of Cressy.

Musa was charmed by the affectionate reception she met with from the Welsh marchioness. And she found her daughter, Lady Gwendolyn, quite as lovely as her betrothed husband had represented her to be.

And after a very delightful evening spent at Montcalla Lodge, August and Musa returned to their hotel.

Musa's second appearance in society, under her title, was at a grand ball given by the Marchioness of Llangollen, at her town house in Westbourne terrace, in honor of the approaching marriage of her daughter, Lady Gwendolyn Newydd, with the Duke of Montcalla.

Musa was now but twenty-six years of age. And the splendor of her dark beauty, enhanced now by the loveliness of love and the light of joy, was more glorious than it had ever been in her life before.

The Countess of Cressy was the belle of that ball, and from that evening she was cited as the most beautiful woman in London.

Later in the month the marriage of the Duke of Montcalla and Lady Gwendolyn Newydd was celebrated at St. George's, Hanover Square. It was said to be the most beautiful as well as the most magnificent wedding of the season.

It was Lady Gwendolyn's pleasure to be attended to the altar by a train of bridesmaids formed of children only. They were six in number, namely, the bride's own and only sister, Lady Winnifred Newydd, a little maiden of fourteen springs; the bridegroom's four young sisters, the Ladies Maude, Edith, Berthe and Constance Caux, and, lastly, his niece, our own little Lady Musette.

The bride was splendidly arrayed in a rich white grosgrain silk, with an overdress and veil of finest point lace, a wreath and bouquet of orange flowers, and the magnificent Montcalla diamonds.

The fairy trains of the little bridesmaids were uniformly dressed in white illusion over white silk, white sashes and bows, and white rosebud wreaths and bouquets.

The youthful Marquis of Llangollen, the brother of the bride, was "best man," or, as we would call him, first groomsman to the bridegroom.

The ceremony was performed by a bishop, assisted by two deans.

After the ceremony the wedding party adjourned to Westbourne terrace, where they partook of a sumptuous wedding breakfast, given by the Marchioness of Llan-

gollen, and where they viewed the costly wedding presents displayed in one of the reception-rooms.

There was a lengthy account of the marriage ceremonies and festivities in the next issue of the *Court Journal.* And among the names of the noble and distinguished guests appeared those of

"Musa, Countess of Cressy, and Mr. Carew."

As the London season drew to a close, Lady Etheldreda Caux, with her little nieces and their maids and governesses, left town for Caux Castle. And, acting under the secret instructions of her idolized nephew, she invited August and Musa, with their two little girls and their ward, to join her autumn party at the castle.

August and Musa accepted the invitation, and, with their family, went North.

It was from Caux Castle that Musa wrote to her American friends and relations, telling them, for the first time, the secret of her first marriage and the birth of her first child, and detailing to them all the events that, since her arrival in England, had led up to her recognition as the Countess of Cressy.

And in due time came back a budget of letters from America, each particular letter superscribed formally to the Countess of Cressy, and all filled with expressions of surprise and congratulations.

Among them, the most earnest and sincere in utterances of heartfelt good-will came from her old guardian, Mr. Lyttleton Locke, and from her devoted young friend, Clarice Howard. Mrs. Kate Carew's contrary acceptance of the news was characteristic.

"Countess of Cressy?" wrote Kate. "Pooh! What is that, when you might have been Duchess of Montcalla, had you so pleased?"

Musa laughed, and showed this letter to her husband.

"Well, my darling, I suppose, if you had not met me, you really would have married Bertie at last," said August, smiling.

"Never!" exclaimed Musa, energetically. "I was very fond of good Bertie in a sisterly way. And I am so still, bless his dear old heart! But I never could have enter-

tained the thought of marrying the Earl of Cressy's brother."

"Well, my dearest, I, for one, quite approve of your sentiments," archly commented August.

And the conversation dropped.

There was yet one letter that Musa had not opened. It was from Mrs. Sutton, her housekeeper at Bay Beauty.

Musa took it from its envelope, and began to read it with careless indifference; but as she read it, her interest awakened and deepened painfully.

After wishing the Countess of Cressy and the little Lady Musette all manner of happiness in the enjoyment of their new fortune, and after informing her patroness that all was right and every one well at Bay Beauty, the poor woman proceeded to say:

But all is as wrong as ever it can be with my poor girl Armida. She has just come back to me, a dreadful wreck of herself—utterly broken down in health and perfectly destitute in circumstances. That grand villain who pretended to marry her had another wife all the time, living on her own estate in Pomerania. And when he got tired of Armida, he just up and told her so, and turned her adrift. She is here with me now, madam; but whether you will permit her to stay here, of course, I cannot tell. And whatever I am to do with her, I am sure I do not know.

Musa paused long and thoughtfully over this letter, and then, to her honor be it written, she sat down and answered it before she replied to any of the others.

She told Mrs. Sutton to keep her unhappy daughter under her own protection at Bay Beauty as long as Armida might choose to remain, even if it should be for the term of her natural life. And she increased the housekeeper's salary, to enable the mother to provide the best medical attendance, as well as every comfort and luxury, for her invalid daughter.

A few days after mailing this letter to Mrs. Sutton, Musa received a very important communication from America that nearly took away her breath.

It was another long letter from her mother, Mrs. Kate Carew.

But we have room only for one short extract, which will, however, explain the whole:

"You will be very much surprised, my dear countess," wrote Kate, "to hear that, at the age of forty-five, I am about to be married for the third time.

"And to another old man, my darling. Old men are my fate. I cannot resist them. Or—they cannot resist me, which is it?

"A third old man! Just think of it! Not an old widower this time, however, and not a Carew. I have pretty well killed off all the unmarried and marriageable male Carews!

"Can you guess who the third unhappy man is to be?

"An old bachelor. Can you guess now?

"A rich old bachelor. Now you can guess.

"No? Then I shall have to tell you. Mr. Lyttleton Locke!

"Yes, countess, I have actually brought down that wary old bird, and it has done me good. I am proud of the job.

"If the Whig candidate for the Presidency should be elected, Mr. Lyttleton Locke will be a member of the Whig cabinet, as Attorney-General. That would suit me very well. I could always tell him what to do, and he would have to do it. I should be 'the power behind the throne stronger than the throne.' Some women clamor about their rights. I quietly take mine—and other people's also.

"Well, my darling, we are to be married on the fifteenth of September, and immediately after the wedding we are to start for Europe. If we do not go down to the bottom of the ocean in the equinoctial storms that may be expected about that time, we shall reach Havre about the first of October. We go first to Paris, thence to Marseilles, thence to Rome. We shall make quite an extended tour of the Continent.

"But we expect to be in London early in February, to witness the opening of Parliament.

"Will your house in Piccadilly be ready to receive us then? For naturally, you know, we shall come to our dear children."

"I declare," said Musa to herself, when she had finished reading his letter, "Kate is worse for marrying than Maggie Seaforth herself. Poor Maggie had the excuse of poverty and helplessness. Kate has none of these. I will write her a very sharp letter."

And she forthwith sat down and wrote

Kate, you are getting into very bad habits. I feel forced to protest, like young Sam Seaforth, that I really can't stand so many stepfathers. No, ma'am. Mr. Lyttleton Locke will make the second that you have given me within the last five years. What do you mean by it? Do you intend to kill off all the fine old gentlemen in the country before you stop marrying, and consent to grow old? I declare that such is my regard for my honored old guardian, that I am tempted to go over and forbid

the banns. I cannot bear the idea of having him added to crown the holocaust of your matrimonial victims.

Musa actually sent off this letter to Mrs. Kate Carew, but her laughing protestations were of no effect whatever. For early in September she received the wedding cards of Mr. and Mrs. Lyttleton Locke.

While these affairs were transpiring, the young heir of Raven Rocks and Pirate's Peak, under the direction of an accomplished private tutor, was studying diligently to make up for wasted years.

Early in January the Countess of Cressy and Mr. Carew took possession of their new house in Piccadilly, so as to be comfortably settled before the meeting of Parliament, and the gathering of fashion to the metropolis. The young Duke and Duchess of Montcalla also came up early in the season to Montcalla Lodge, Kensington. And the Marchioness of Llangollen, with her son, the youthful marquis came up to her town house on Westbourne terrace.

At the first drawing-room of the season at Buckingham Palace there were two distinguished presentations. The first was that of the young Duchess of Montcalla, on her marriage. The second was that of the Countess of Cressy. Both these ladies were presented by the Marchioness of Llangollen.

And if the young duchess was the more interesting on account of her bridal freshness, early youth, and high rank, the beautiful countess was more effective upon other grounds. The splendor of her grand, dark, oriental syle of beauty made the greatest impression of the day.

And thus, in this season, as in the last, the Countess of Cressy was voted by all the clubs to be the most beautiful woman in England.

And the house of the Countess of Cressy and Mr. Carew, in Piccadilly, became one of the most distinguished centers of intellect, beauty and fashion in London.

Mr. and Mrs. Lyttleton Locke did not reach London as early in the season as they had expected to do. They had extended their travels farther and protracted their stay longer than they had intended. And thus it hap-

pened that they did not arrive until near the end of February. They came directly to the house of August and Musa, in Piccadilly, and were very cordially received by their host and hostess.

Mr. Lyttleton Locke occupied himself chiefly in attending the debates in the House of Commons and the trials in the Westminster Courts.

Kate threw herself with all her soul into the whirl of fashionable life, enjoying it as if she had been but twenty-one instead of forty-five.

And Kate took a malicious pleasure in saving marked copies of the *Court Journal* that contained notices of the Countess of Cressy's beauty, elegance and wit, or of her brilliant parties, or of her appearance at this, that or the other royal state dinner or princely ball, and sending them over to Washington to those women who had once so cruelly maligned Musa.

CHAPTER XX.

MUSETTE'S HAPPINESS.

And she will wed her earliest love—
One who in youngest childhood and ripe youth
Was ever hers; with whose advancing thought
She grew entwined; to whom in time, she'll yield
Her maiden coyness, and in mystic band
Will link herself, for aye—one heart, one life,
Blended together in the innermost soul.—H. ALFORD.

Happy lives have no history, it is said. And the lives of the people in whom I have been trying to interest you flowed on from this time forth so peacefully that there is little to record of them for years to come.

And that little may be written in a few words.

First, the Whig candidate for the Presidency was not elected, so Mr. Lyttleton Locke was not made Attorney-General, and Mrs. Lyttleton Locke did not get the coveted opportunity of putting her jeweled finger into the political pie.

But they went back to Washington City, where Kate set up a magnificent establishment at the Poplars, en-

tertained fashionable company, and spent the old lawyer's money extravagantly all the week, and dragged him to church three times every Sunday, and made him believe that he never knew how to live until she had taught him the way.

Mr. Lyttleton Locke is a very tough old gentleman, seasoned by fifty years of hardening in the legal profession. So I do not think that Kate will succeed in killing him very soon; or that she will ever have a fourth husband, or give Musa a third stepfather.

The same may be said, by the way, of her humble rival in the matrimonial race—the very-much-married Maggie Wilks.

The Rev. Mr. Wilks is a sallow, billious, melancholy subject, and therefore we know that because he has got no liver to speak of he will live forever; and that Maggie will not have to add her lamentations for her "poor Jerry," to those for her "poor Jack," and her "poor Hal." And Sam will never be called upon to "stand" another stepfather.

But to return to Kate.

In all her social intercourse in Washington she had the good taste not to talk overmuch of her "daughter the Countess of Cressy," except on occasions when she met any of those malicious women who had so basely slandered Musa in the past seasons; then, indeed, Kate gave the reins to her tongue and to her imagination, and let them run. And she must have been above, or below, the average of feminine human nature had she forborne to do so.

It was in the second year of their residence in London that Musa presented her husband with a fine boy, much to the delight of August, who, naturally enough, desired a son.

Mr. Carew's life career seemed to be decided. It was to be a diplomatic one, as that for which his genius and training best fitted him.

He remained attached to the American Legation in London until the recall of the minister, in the autumn of the third year of his foreign civil service.

Then Mr. Carew and Musa, with their children and their ward, returned with the legation to America.

They reached Washington early in the winter, and took up their residence in their house on Vermont avenue, which had been got ready for their reception under the supervision of Mrs. Chief Justice Shrewsbury.

And Musa re-entered once more upon the *rôle* of a leader of fashion.

And Mrs. Lyttleton Locke's heart swelled with triumph as she saw how Musa was courted, followed and flattered by those very persons who had once so cruelly maligned her. Here Musa met her dear friends, Captain and Mrs. Philip Shrewsbury, who had kept the Vermont avenue home warm for her during her long absence, and who still remained at the earnest desire of their hostess.

Samuel Carew had not accompanied his guardians to Washington, but had parted from them in New York to go up to Inwood and see his mother; and there, much to poor Maggie's delight, he became fully reconciled to his clerical stepfather, and even continued his studies under the Rev. Mr. Wilks' directions.

Early in the following summer Mr. Carew and Musa went down to Bay Beauty, where they found everything in a prosperous and flourishing condition.

There Musa found her old treacherous enemy, Armida Sutton; an enemy no longer, but a poor, crushed, heart-broken and penitent woman, who could only be met with pity and pardon.

Musa kissed the seal of full forgiveness on her pale lips, and told her to live in peace with her mother, at Bay Beauty, as long as she should desire to do so.

And thus Armida found a warm home there for the rest of her life.

While staying at Bay Beauty, August and Musa renewed their affectionate intimacy with their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Horace Howard, of The Shoals. Clarice, in addition to her fair little boy, Percie, who was about the age of Musa's Ethelinda, had now a pretty little girl, whom she called Dora, after Musa's mother.

Early in June, Mr. and Mrs. Lyttleton Locke came down to Pirate's Peak to spend the summer.

And in July, Mrs. Chief Justice and Captain and

Mrs. Philip Shrewsbury arrived on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Howard, at The Shoals.

And Clarice, in her delight at this reunion, declared that with Musa there, and all the others, it was quite like old times.

But another flattering change was at hand for August and Musa.

In September of that year, Mr. Carew's distinguished talents as a diplomat were recognized, and his important services to his government, while he was attached to the American Legation at London, were rewarded by his appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Austria, with instructions to proceed on his mission without delay.

Musa and August took leave of their friends, and with their children and servants went to New York to meet the United States ship *Nevada,* that was to take the new minister and his suite to Europe.

Before sailing, Mr. Carew and Musa took their children and old Cassy up to Inwood to see Mr. and Mrs. Wilks, and also to resume their charge of their ward, Samuel Carew, who, his guardian decided, should complete his studies in Germany.

They found the worthy couple moderately well and prosperous. Mr. Wilks' "Preparatory School for Young Gentlemen" was in quite a flourishing condition.

Maggie wept happy tears over Musette, whom she declared she should have known anywhere by her beautiful eyes.

"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

Maggie's conscience was troubled, however, about occupying the Brown Cottage—"trespassing," she called it, "living there so long without paying a cent of rent."

Musa assured her that she never should be called upon to pay, adding:

"I would give you the place in fee simple, Maggie, if I had not long ago given it to Musette. But Musette is an heiress now, and will never want it. And when she is of legal age to dispose of it, I know she will give it to you. Will you not, my darling?" said the mother, turning to the child.

Almost any child thus appealed to would have promised the gift, as a matter of course.

But little Musette understood and felt what she promised, and she answered earnestly:

"Oh, indeed I will, Mrs. Wilks. I shall love to give it to you. It is so pretty, and you like it so much."

The visit was necessarily a short one. And Mr. Carew and Musa, with their children and ward, and old Cassy, prepared to return to the city. In taking leave of the Brown Cottage for the last time, old Cassy delivered her sentiments as follows:

"I lived to be well on to sixty year ole, in peace and quietness, among my own people, and expected to die the same. But now, bless the Lord! ever since that time I have come to be a great trabeler in my ole days. Couldn't I write a book about it if I knowed how? Umph! umph! Here I been goin' up and down on the yeth, and a walking to and fro on it, like old Satan in the days of St. Job, and doin' nuffin else, for the last ten year! 'Deed, I spects I'll have to end my days amongst the speckled niggers on the Sandditch Islands, afore I die yet!"

The new embassy to the Court of Austria sailed on the first of October, and in due course of time arrived safely at their destination.

His Excellency, Augsut Carew, Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, etc., etc., and Musa, Countess of Cressy, took their proper places at once in the court circle of Vienna. And the countess became as celebrated in social coteries for her beauty and wit as the minister was distinguished in political cliques for statecraft and diplomatic talent. Samuel Carew lived at a German university, but spent all his holidays and vacations at the house of the American minister at Vienna.

And it was through the superior intellect and spiritual influence and inspirations of that house and circle that the honest and affectionate boy developed into a pure and noble man, worthy even of the love of the sweet maiden Musette, the love that was destined to bless his whole life.

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ness was not at all suited to his taste or to his ambition. So he read law at Gottingen, and made a specialty of the study of international law.

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Everywhere Samuel Carew accompanied them, fascinated by the spell of Musette's loveliness, both of person and disposition, and every year rising step by step as a member of the legation.

Musette returned his devotion with the purest love that seraph ever felt for man.

Musette herself was universally loved, and from her first appearance in society, which took place when her parents were at the Court of St. Germain, many noble and wealthy suitors sought her hand in marriage. Even a German prince laid his royalty at her feet.

But this "maiden meek" turned away from her royal and noble suitors, and with the consent and blessing of her mother she gave the priceless treasure of her heart to him who had been her lifelong lover, "to him who in laughing childhood and ripe youth was ever hers." And so we will leave Musette, in a heaven of love that emanates from her own angel-spirit and brightens and blesses all that come within her sphere.

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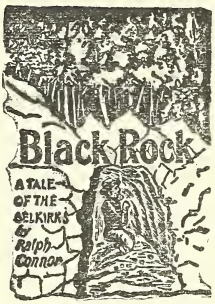

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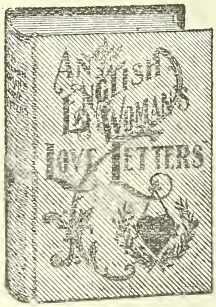

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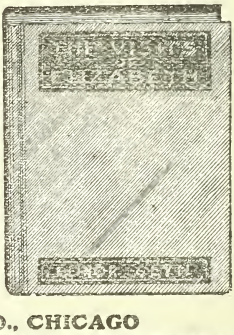

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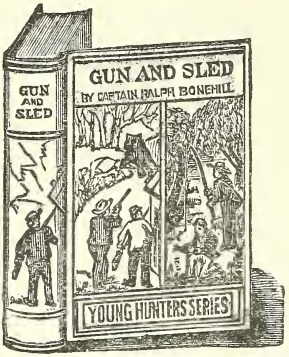

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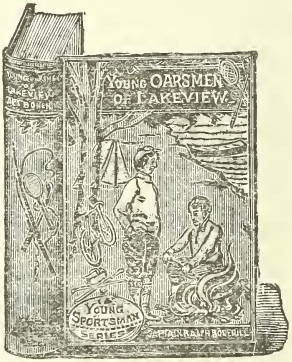

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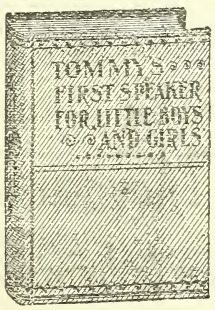

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